

Progress Implementing the Texas Foundation High School Program

December 2021

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand how high schools in Texas were implementing the new graduation requirements that were enacted under House Bill 5 during the 2013 Texas Legislature. The study included interviews and survey data collected from 50 randomly selected public high schools in Texas during the 2018–19 school year. The study team conducted interviews with 50 principals and 50 lead counselors, and administered a survey to 5,633 students in Grade 12. Results from the interviews highlight consequences of the new graduation requirements for high school staffing, communication with students and families, partnerships with local industry, and students' college and career readiness and outcomes. The survey results explored seniors' reactions to the new graduation requirements, including their intent to continue their education after highs school. Findings from the site visits have several implications for the Texas Education Agency to consider as they support school systems in improving outcomes for all public school students.

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Background

For many decades, high schools focused on preparing students for either postsecondary education or entry-level jobs. Under this approach, career and technical education (CTE) was expected to serve the needs of students who did not anticipate going to college, including students with low academic achievement. Meanwhile, those students preparing for college were expected to complete more credits in core academic subject areas.

Over time, this approach has changed. Reform models that integrate CTE and academic preparation are intended to elevate career pathways and make them and students' academic coursework more relevant to one another. The hope is that a more integrated, career-focused approach will improve student engagement and motivation as well as the transition to higher education, workforce education programs, or entry-level jobs.

In 2013, Texas enacted House Bill 5 (HB 5), which modified Texas' high school graduation requirements in three important ways:

1. **It introduced greater flexibility** into required state graduation coursework, including eliminating Algebra II as a mathematics requirement.
2. **It reduced the number** of required state secondary school examinations from 15 to 5.
3. **It changed the Automatic Admission policy,** which offers automatic admission to state-funded universities to Texas high school students who graduate in the top 10% of their class.

Known as the Foundation High School Program, HB 5 placed greater emphasis on career preparation by including five career-area endorsement options into the state's graduation requirements to provide students with the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge of a subject area.

The changes introduced by HB 5 were not without controversy, both inside and outside Texas. Some applauded the introduction of the endorsements, the removal of 10 end-of-course exams, and the elimination of the Algebra II requirement. They argued that these changes may prevent some non–college-bound students from dropping out of high school by allowing them to take more CTE and applied mathematics courses that may better align with their areas of interest and career goals. Others embraced the endorsements but viewed as problematic the reduction in the rigor of graduation requirements (i.e., the removal of Algebra II) and the elimination of the English III and Algebra II end-of-course exams used to assess college readiness. Those who viewed the reduction in the rigor of graduation requirements as problematic expected the changes in the Texas high school graduation requirements to have the largest potential effects on African American and Hispanic students, who traditionally have had lower rates of college readiness and enrollment than other Texas students. Critics of the HB 5 changes assert that all students should be prepared to meet the challenges of a competitive workforce, whether or not their future includes college.



Project Overview

In light of this context, there has been considerable interest both within Texas and nationally in an evaluation investigating the impact of the state's new high school graduation requirements on student outcomes. Both the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Legislature expressed a commitment to examining this impact. In response, the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) partnered with TEA and was awarded an Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies research grant. This grant is funded under the Partnerships and Collaborations Focused on Problems of Practice or Policy (84.305H) program at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education.

The primary goal of this 5-year research grant, which is funded from 2017–18 through 2021–22, is to examine the impact of HB 5 on student outcomes, including high school graduation, college readiness, 2- and 4-year college enrollment, remedial mathematics course-taking in college, 2- and 4-year college persistence, college completion, and completion of workforce certificates. Texas launched the Foundation High School Program with the group of students who entered Grade 9 in 2014–15. Thus, the spring graduating class of 2018 was the first cohort of students to graduate under the new requirements, which made the timing of the grant ideal to examine the impact of HB 5 across several cohorts of students.

A secondary goal of the research grant, and the focus of this report, is to examine how the new graduation requirements are being implemented in public school districts across Texas. Under HB 5, districts have significant control over the courses they offer. To understand how high schools are implementing the Foundation High School Program, as well as students' responses to the new requirements, the research team conducted site visits to 50 randomly selected high schools, evenly distributed across the Education Service Center (ESC) regions, in 2018–19. During these site visits, the team interviewed principals and counselors and administered a survey to all Grade 12 students (see Appendix A for a description of the survey data and methods, including the sampling frame for randomly selecting high schools; Appendix B for the principal and counselor interview protocols; and Appendix C for the Grade 12 student survey).

> The research team conducted site visits to **50 randomly selected high schools** across Texas in 2018–19.

The site visit data are summarized within six chapters of this report:

1. Changes Made to High School Curriculum and Staffing
2. Communicating About the Foundation High School Program to Staff, Parents, and Students
3. Advising Students on the New Graduation Requirements
4. Impact on Student Opportunities, Preparation, and Outcomes
5. Students' Reactions to the Foundation High School Program
6. Summary of Findings and Next Steps



Chapter 1. Changes Made to High School Curriculum and Staffing

This chapter summarizes the changes that Texas principals and counselors described making to their high school curriculum and staffing to accommodate the Foundation High School Program. As mentioned, the program includes five career-area endorsement options: Arts and Humanities, Business and Industry, Public Service, STEM, and Multidisciplinary Studies (this last option gives students the flexibility to explore more than one career or academic pathway). Districts may offer anywhere from one to all five endorsements. However, districts that offer only one endorsement also must offer Multidisciplinary Studies.[1]

In addition to selecting which endorsements to offer high school students, districts may select and create the course pathway options within each endorsement. The Texas State Board of Education has approved between two and five possible pathway options for each endorsement. Districts may offer multiple pathways, and students may complete any of them. The Business and Industry, Public Service, and STEM endorsements also include a CTE pathway option. (See Appendix D for the complete list of endorsements and pathway options.) Of the 50 schools the research team visited, 36 (72%) offered *all five* endorsements to students.

> Of the 50 high schools visited, 36 offered *all five* career-area endorsements.

1.1 Endorsement Pathways and Courses

Of the 50 principals interviewed, 20 had been at their current high school for 4 years or more. These 20 principals were asked to describe any changes they had made to their high school courses in moving from the previous Minimum, Recommended, and Distinguished graduation requirements to the Foundation High School Program.[2] Sixty percent, or 12 principals, indicated they had made changes to their course offerings or alterations to existing courses to meet endorsement or career pathway requirements.

1.1.1 Changes to Course Offerings

Some principals reported making considerable changes to course offerings by adding or removing several courses. Other principals reported making less extensive changes. For example, one principal indicated he had added more CTE courses but basically kept the 4x4 (four credits in each of the four foundation subject areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies) graduation plan with Multidisciplinary Studies. Still other

1 There are some exceptions to districts offering the Multidisciplinary Studies as some content-specific high schools may offer a different endorsement. For example, some STEM academies chose to offer the STEM endorsement.

2 Students entering Grade 9 prior to 2014–15 graduated under one of three graduation types: Minimum, Recommended, or Distinguished.

> So we looked at all the people that we had, what they were certified, capable, willing to teach, and kind of created our pathways based on that. The first year of implementation was very messy. We had 75 classes go [forward]. I mean, it was just kind of a hot mess. And so we came back next year, narrowed the focus, and really came up with a very strategic plan on the classes that we would offer in the order that we would offer. We created our course selection guide, which that in itself was very difficult, or not difficult, but time consuming to do. And so every year, we look at the classes. We make sure that we do a little survey and make sure the kids are enjoying what they are doing. Is it something they want to do, continue to do, and that's where we are right now with it.
>
> — Principal, non-metropolitan stable high school, Region 18 ESC

principals indicated they had to cut back on some of their course offerings or change course titles to meet endorsement requirements. A principal at a rural high school shared, "Because we are so small, we had to really narrow down and look at what we could offer our students [to] be a true endorsement."[3] Those principals who did not report changing any course offerings indicated their schools already offered a range of courses that aligned with the endorsement options.

1.1.2 Changes to Course Content

Some principals reported making changes to course content rather than adding or removing entire courses. For example, a principal at a suburban high school reported the school had to "tweak" existing classes and hire new staff to support pathway sequences for computer science, law enforcement, nursing, and welding. "We're still needing to add some pieces that we feel are going to be beneficial," the principal noted, "and I think they're on track for next year's implementation."

1.1.3 Changes to CTE Offerings

All 50 principals were asked whether their school had implemented any new CTE pathways aligned with the new graduation requirements. More than half of principals (58%) indicated they had. The most popular career pathways that high schools reported adding were in the fields of engineering, health science, welding, and computer science. For example, a principal from a high school in an independent town reported, "Instead of hiring another shop teacher, we hired an Ag[riculture] teacher to do some of those same things. Now he, that's what he's concentrating on, is the building, welding, and then all the fabrication type classes. He teaches those. He has seven classes of it."

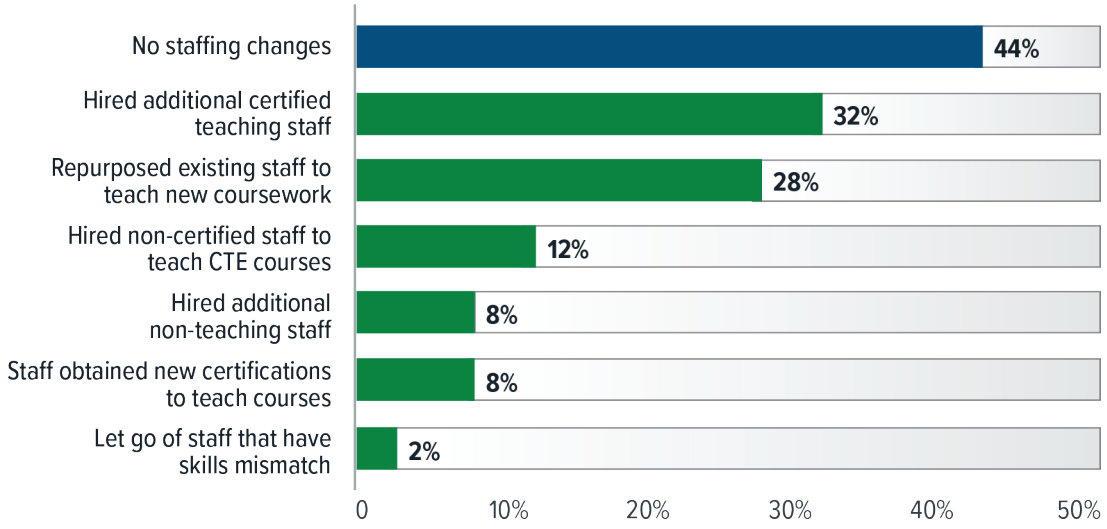
Almost one quarter of principals (22%) indicated their school had not been able to implement additional career pathway opportunities due to budget issues (i.e., hiring new staff, cost of course materials). This challenge was particularly true for rural schools, which made up half of the Texas high schools that reported not creating any additional career pathways.

3 High schools are described using TEA's community type classification. These district types group districts into eight categories ranging from major urban to rural. Charter school districts make up a ninth category. See https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-data/district-type-data-search/district-type-2019-20 for additional detail.

1.2 Staffing Patterns

All 50 principals were asked to describe any staffing changes they had made to accommodate the new graduation requirements. More than half of the principals (56%) indicated they had made changes such as hiring additional teaching staff or repurposing existing staff (Exhibit 1.1).

Exhibit 1.1. Staffing Changes Principals Reported They Made in Response to the Foundation High School Program



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

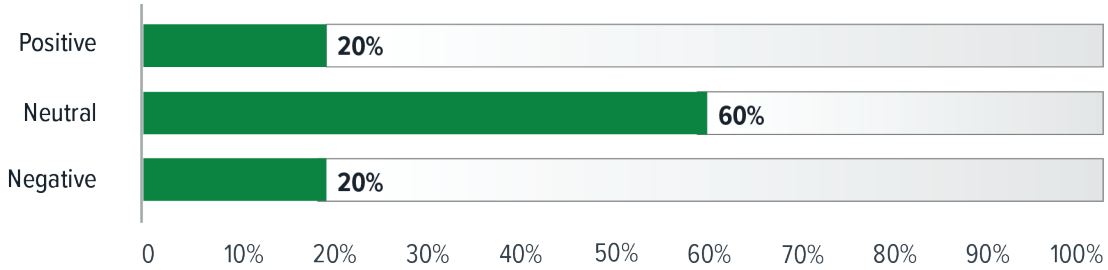
Other principals reported using innovative ways to fill their teaching needs, including having staff obtain new certifications to teach courses (8%) and using *District of Innovation* or charter school status to bring in noncertified teaching staff with relevant work experience to teach career pathway courses (12%). Finally, some principals reported hiring nonteaching staff, such as additional counselors, in response to the new high school graduation requirements (8%).

> We have hired a second ag[riculture] teacher, which allowed us to offer another group of clusters in the ag[riculture] department. He was strictly shop-based … and he did offer one animal science class. So now horticulture is offered, landscaping is offered, floral design is offered. We've got an equine and small animal science [pathway]. So we were able to really offer more things on the business industry side.
>
> — Principal, rural high school, Region 8 ESC

1.2.1 Impact to Staff Responsibilities

The research team also asked the 20 principals who had been employed at their high schools for 4 years or more whether the impact on teachers and other school staff of switching to the Foundation High School Program had been negative, positive, or neutral. Twelve principals, which represented the largest percentage (60%), indicated that the impact on teachers and other staff had been neutral (Exhibit 1.2).

Exhibit 1.2. Principals' Perceptions of the Impact of the Foundation High School Program and the Accompanying Changes to Graduation Requirements on School Staff



Note. *N* = 20.

Four principals (20%) reported a positive impact on staff because the program allowed schools to hire additional personnel and influenced staff perspectives. For example, a principal at one rural school shared that teachers seemed more goal-oriented and forward-focused with regard to the courses students need to take.

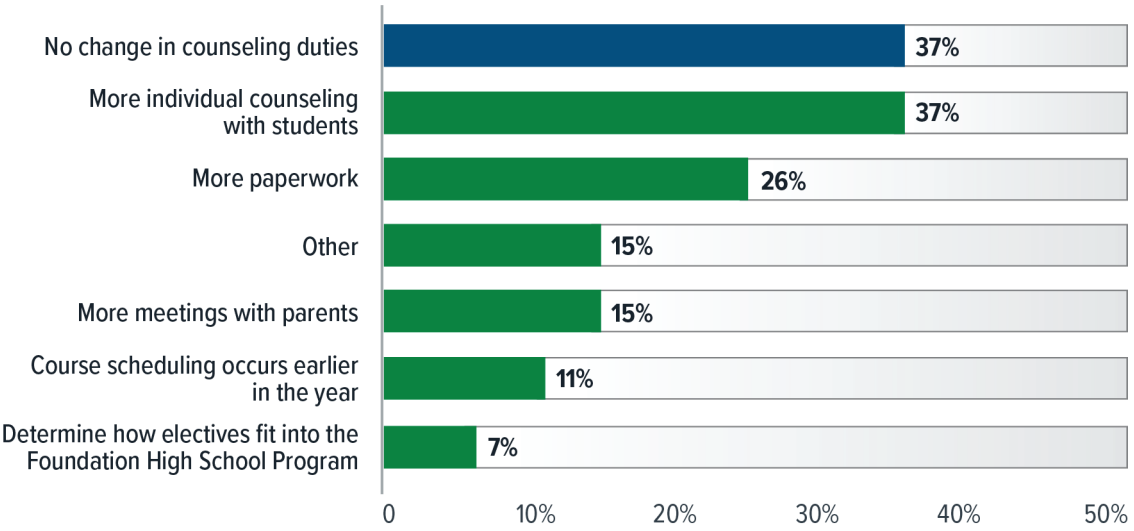
However, the remaining four principals (20%) believed the Foundation High School Program's impact on staff had been negative, in particular because it had increased the workload for counselors (Exhibit 1.2).

> On my counseling staff, it is going to kill them before it's all said and done. They were already meeting with kids, but now they meet with all kids every year, and that takes a lot of time. The academic guidance doesn't allow them to do the social-emotional guidance, and when the social, emotional, and crises happen, academics goes on the side, and they're just worn out.... I was like, "We've got to have more help." I don't know how districts are funding counselors. I feel like it was a mandate without the thought of the workload it was going to cause for the counselors, but I could see that we were going to lose good counselors because of this, and that worries me.
>
> — Principal, other central city high school, Region 13 ESC

1.2.2 Impact to Counselor Responsibilities

Counselors who had been employed in that role at their school for 4 years or more were asked a series of questions about changes they had made in response to the graduation requirements. More than one third of counselors (37%) indicated that their duties had not changed (Exhibit 1.3).

Exhibit 1.3. Changes Counselors Reported They Made to Their Counseling Duties in Response to the Foundation High School Program



Note. *N* = 27. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

However, almost two thirds of the counselors reported their duties had changed, noting they were spending more time providing individual counseling to students (37%) and completing more paperwork related to the endorsements (26%).

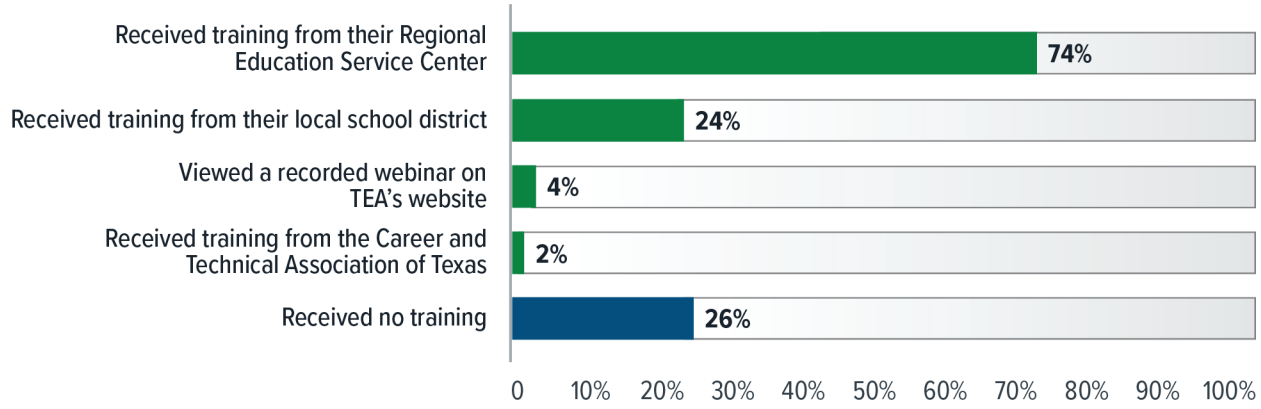
In addition, 15% of counselors reported holding more meetings with parents to discuss the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements, 11% of counselors reported moving course scheduling to earlier in the school year, and 7% of counselors indicated they spent time determining how elective courses fit into the Foundation High School Program. Finally, 15% of counselors reported other changes to their duties, including providing course descriptions for college applications, assisting with course planning for the upcoming school year, learning about career trends in Texas, and focusing specifically on CTE students (Exhibit 1.3).

> Before, with the 4×4 [graduation plan], you didn't have to do that. Everybody just chose, either you're going to be on the Minimal, or you're going to be the Distinguished, and you're going to have to take these [courses]. … And now, you have to sit down and talk to [students] about, "Okay, you don't have to take physics anymore. But, if you're really going to college, you might want to think about it, because you're going to need it." So it just takes a lot more preparation for them to understand, "Okay, if I don't take these classes, how is that going to affect me later?"
>
> — Counselor, non-metropolitan stable high school, Region 18 ESC

1.2.3 Counselor Professional Development and Training on the Foundation High School Program

All counselors were asked whether they had received training to assist students with navigating the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements. About three quarters of counselors (74% or 37 counselors) indicated they had attended training sessions or received information on the new graduation requirements from their regional ESC (Exhibit 1.4). See the fact sheet on page 10 for a summary of the types of training and supports that ESCs provided to district staff.

Exhibit 1.4. Training Counselors Reported Receiving on Foundation High School Program Graduation Requirements



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

In addition, about one quarter of counselors reported receiving training on the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements from their local school district. A few counselors reported viewing a recorded webinar on TEA's website or receiving training from the Career and Technical Association of Texas (Exhibit 1.4).

All but one counselor found the trainings helpful or useful. One counselor from a suburban school noted that the regional ESC trainings they attended were "actually very good trainings, very informative. I know it seems like a lot, but each year that's passing, we become more familiar with things." Another counselor from a small rural school commented that the regional ESC trainings were "very helpful, and even though it's overwhelming, it's good to know that new information."

Counselors were asked to describe any additional training they would like to receive. Recommendations included the following:

- Real-life examples of course sequences to fulfill an endorsement (4 counselors)
- On-site assistance or coaching on implementing the Foundation High School Program (2 counselors)
- Guidance on how special education students can participate in the Foundation High School Program (2 counselors)
- Guidance on how to align courses with pathways (2 counselors)
- Examples of Foundation High School Program implementation in other schools (1 counselor)

1.3 Additional Resources High Schools Need to Implement the Foundation High School Program

Principals were asked what additional resources or information their school needed to better implement the Foundation High School Program. The two most common answers were additional funding (36%) and additional staff (32%), especially teachers and counselors.

Counselors noted a need for more funding (80%) and more teachers and counselors (40%). As one counselor from a rural school mentioned, “A lot of times there’s mandates, and no funding to match them. That’s difficult.” One counselor from an other central city high school noted for its Certified Nurse Aid program said, “We have stethoscopes, gate belts, and the funding is not there. There’s a bigger expense than just what we’re getting from Perkins.” Another counselor mentioned that their rural school is “in need of more teachers in this one area because [the business and industry] endorsement is huge.”

FACT SHEET

ESC District Training and Supports on the Foundation High School Program

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During the 2019–20 academic year, AIR researchers interviewed 24 key staff across the 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs) in Texas to learn about the district training and supports they offered on the Foundation High School Program. Interviewed staff included ESC directors, counseling consultants, and career and technical education (CTE) specialists.

All 20 ESCs reported offering a **range of ongoing training and support** for districts to assist students in navigating the Foundation High School Program.

Standard trainings and workshops

- Half-day or all-day "deep dive" trainings an average of 1 to 3 times a year.
- Targeting counselors but open to administrators, teachers, CTE specialists, and others.
- Topics include Programs of Study, Personal Graduation Plans, endorsements, the Texas Administrative Code Chapter 74, supports for new high school counselors, and family outreach.

Integrated or specialized trainings and support

- Sessions integrated into other trainings, such as Counselor Academies or College and Career Readiness workshops.
- Specialized trainings for new counselors.
- Training, conference, and symposium sessions on the regional labor market and the fastest-growing job sectors (offered in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission).

On-site group and one-on-one consultations

- As needed or by request
- On-site trainings for staff and parents
- 1:1 technical assistance for key staff, including new counselors.
- District and student discussions with career specialists about the labor market (via shared grants with the Texas Workforce Commission).
- Transcript audits.

ESCs reported creating or offering a **mix of resources and tools** to inform districts about the Foundation High School Program both during and outside of trainings.

- Quick reference guides
- Infographics
- LiveBinders
- Personal Graduation Plan templates
- Flip charts, such as on the Texas graduation requirements
- Diploma 101 Handbook
- Texas OnCourse House Bill 5 modules and resources

Fifteen ESCs reported receiving **district requests** for additional resources and support related to the Foundation High School Program.

- **General requests** included information on updates to the Foundation High School Program, information about CTE, sample forms and templates for districts, and a Grade 8 curriculum to introduce the Foundation High School Program to students.
- **Software requests** included assistance using the district's internal management software, developing an early warning system, and tracking college, career, and military readiness and accountability as well as more technical requests related to coding and transcripts. Some ESCs reported they have departments or staff that provide software assistance.

ESCs reported using a range of methods to **assess district trainings and resources** on the Foundation High School Program to inform future offerings.

- Surveys, including post-training surveys and larger-scale needs assessments, informal feedback at district trainings and in-person meetings, and evaluations
- Input from the Directors of Counseling cohort and counselor advisory teams
- Information from legislative sessions about new laws and mandates

ESCs reported relying on several sources to **stay up-to-date** on the Foundation High School Program.

- TEA LISTSERVS, correspondence letters, webinars, or trainings
- Texas Regional Counselor Specialists monthly meetings
- Texas OnCourse
- Texas Association of School Boards
- Information about Texas laws, mandates, and legislation

ESCs reported using a range of methods to **communicate updates** about the Foundation High School Program to districts.

- Monthly newsletters and email LISTSERVS for district counselors/other staff
- Trainings
- Meetings (instructional leadership network meetings, curriculum director meetings, counselor network meetings, committee meetings, and counselor professional learning communities)
- ESC websites
- LiveBinder resources
- State-level presentations

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Chapter 2. Communicating About the Foundation High School Program to Staff, Parents, and Students

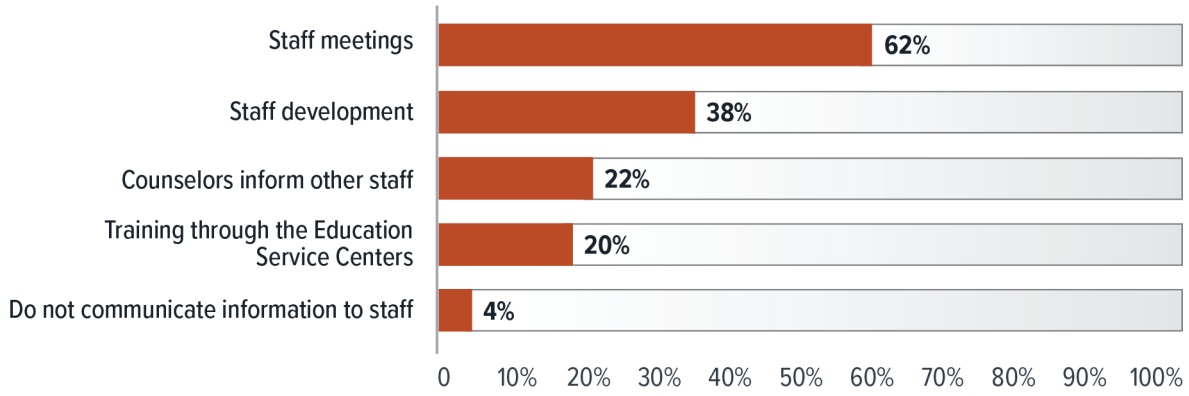
This chapter summarizes the methods that principals and counselors reported using to communicate the requirements of the Foundation High School Program to staff, parents, and students. The chapter also summarizes principals' and counselors' perceptions of how well staff, parents, and students understood the new graduation requirements and endorsements.

2.1 Communicating With High School Staff

All principals were asked to describe the ways in which they have communicated information about the Foundation High School Program to teachers and other school-based staff. The majority of principals (62%) reported using staff meetings to communicate this information (Exhibit 2.1).

> "Every Wednesday we have department head meetings, and so I meet with department heads, and anything new that comes up, we just try to keep it before them, because if you don't, then you forget what it's all about. … Then [department heads] in turn have to meet the following day with their departments. … Staff meetings if we need to do that as well."
>
> — Principal, other central city high school, Region 14 ESC

Exhibit 2.1. Methods Principals Reported for Communicating About the Foundation High School Program With Staff



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

A little more than one third (38%) of principals discussed sharing information about the new graduation requirements through staff development sessions. About 22% of principals revealed that the school counselor provides information to staff about the program.

> We've had several staff developments geared toward [the Foundation High School Program]. That started last year. … There's constantly meetings being held. We usually have [professional learning communities] on Wednesdays. If there's any extra additional information that needs to be given to them, counselors are always going for updates to make sure that they have the latest information.
>
> — Principal, major suburban high school, Region 1 ESC

In addition, 20% of principals indicated that counselors and other school staff receive most or all their information from their regional ESC. For example, a principal from a suburban high school in ESC 5 noted, "Region 5 gives us updates on what we need to have happen, and they [counselors] are all Region 5 savvy. We send them all as a team. … We'll send selective administrators, but all of the counselors will go, because they visit with all of the students."

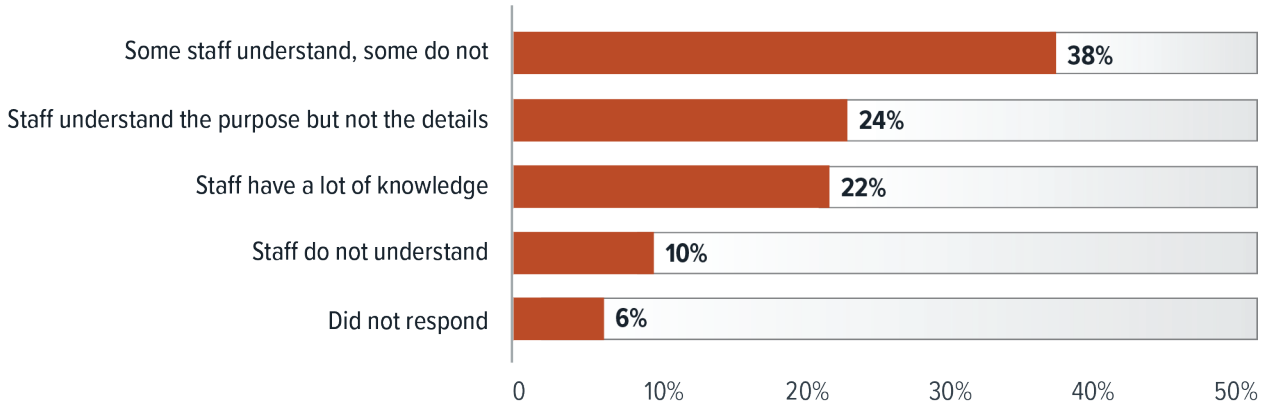
Finally, two principals (4%) indicated that they do not communicate information about the new graduation requirements to staff (Exhibit 2.1).

2.1.1 Staff Understanding of the Foundation High School Program

Principals were asked to describe their perceptions of school staff members' understanding of the Foundation High School Program. Overall, principals agreed that counselors understood the graduation requirements and endorsements best. Principals' perceptions of other staff members' understanding of the Foundation High School Program ranged from *very knowledgeable* (22%) to *no understanding at all* (10%) (Exhibit 2.2).

> I think they [high school staff] understand it. They understand why we're doing it. They understand the sequence of it. Well, they're the ones who designed it. I did not design the sequence of classes. We had them come in. … And so [the agriculture teacher] and I sat down, and he's like, "Okay, so these are the classes that we can do for manufacturing. This would be the sequence we can do it in. These are the classes we can do for animal husbandry. That would be the sequence we would do it in." So they're the ones who designed the sequence. So they've got a very good understanding of that to make sure that they have the latest information.
>
> — Principal, non-metropolitan stable high school, Region 18 ESC

Exhibit 2.2. Principals' Perceptions of Staff Understanding of the Foundation High School Program



Note. $N = 50$.

The 38% of principals who thought *only some* of their staff understood the Foundation High School Program tended to report that their CTE teachers were more knowledgeable about the new curriculum requirements than teachers of core academic subjects (Exhibit 2.2).

> You want me to be honest with you? I think if I'm a biology teacher, I'm more interested in teaching my course. At the high school, the one that really needs to understand it is the counselor because the counselor is the one that's going to lead the students. The teacher is busy teaching whatever area it is that they're doing. … If you're on the career and technical education side, where you're the engineering teacher or the medical teacher, then those are the ones that have more training.
>
> — Principal, major suburban high school, Region 10 ESC

Of the 24% of principals who reported that most of their staff understood the *purpose* of the Foundation High School Program but not the *details,* most shared statements similar to these from a principal in a rural school in

Region 14 ESC: “We’re still in the early stages of this, so I think it’s still a growing process, but I think there’s an excitement. I think there’s been a spark that’s being brought to our town, and things that may not have happened in the past, I think they see hope and they see a bright future to it. I think there’s excitement, but I think we’re still in the early stages where we still are working on growing and getting better and learning our craft and those kinds of things.”

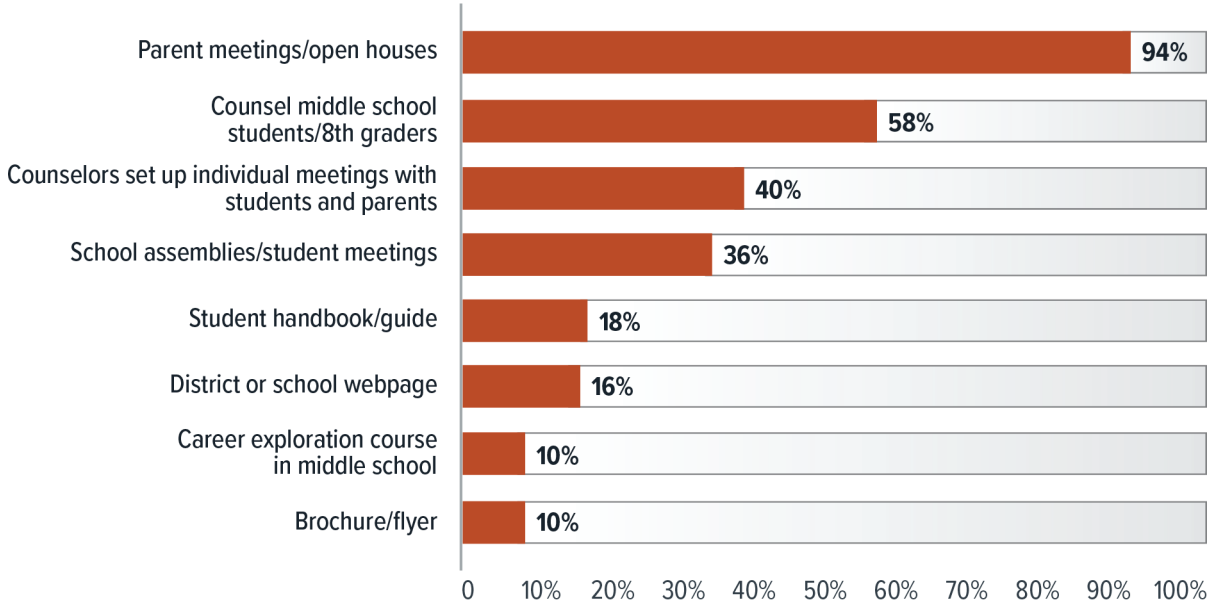
Principals who did not think their staff understood the Foundation High School Program tended to report providing less communication to staff about the program. For example, a principal in a central city high school in ESC 18 shared, “It’s not really conversation that we have with our teachers, unfortunately.”

2.2 Communicating With Parents and Students

Counselors were asked how their school informs students and parents about the high school graduation requirements and endorsement options. Most counselors (94%) indicated their school held parent meetings or open houses to inform families (Exhibit 2.3). For example, a counselor from a high school in a rural district reported that their school offers a spring career fair and presentation for incoming freshmen and their families.

> “Parent meetings and classroom presentations. We send out an alert now. We have links on our website also to all of the PowerPoints and everything else that we produce. For example, Friday, this Friday, we’re going into the classrooms all day. All of my class counselors to go give a PowerPoint presentation on graduation requirements, what the endorsements look like, what the next step is, GPA, everything, everything. We do that yearly to every single grade level [in high school].”
>
> — Counselor, other central city suburban high school, Region 1 ESC

Exhibit 2.3. Types of Communication Counselors Reported Using to Inform Students and Parents About the Foundation High School Program



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

More than half of counselors (58%) indicated their school counseled middle school students or eighth graders about graduation requirements before they entered high school. In addition, about 40% of counselors indicated they hold individual meetings with parents and students about the Foundation High School Program (Exhibit 2.3).

> Every March, we meet with the eighth graders coming over. We go over endorsements. We hand them a packet of the different types of endorsements, what classes go under those endorsements. It also lists the credit requirements for graduation and how many credits per year they should obtain if they're successful in all their classes. We have a question-and-answer time.
>
> — Counselor, non-metropolitan stable high school, Region 7 ESC

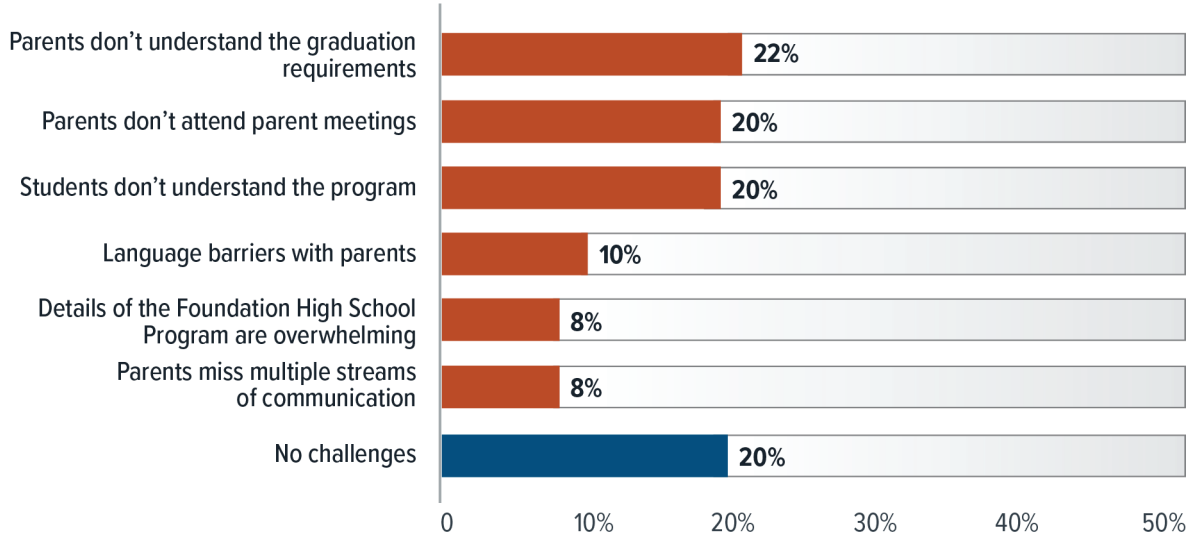
Other common methods of communication that counselors reported using to inform parents and students about the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements included holding student meetings or assemblies (36%), providing students with a student handbook or course guide (18%), posting information on a district or school webpage (16%), having students attend a career exploration course in middle school (10%), and providing students and parents with informational brochures or flyers (10%).

2.2.1 Challenges Communicating With Parents and Students

Counselors were asked about the challenges they encountered when communicating with parents and students about the high school graduation requirements and endorsement options. Almost a quarter of counselors (22%) indicated a major challenge is that parents do not understand the graduation requirements (Exhibit 2.4). Another 20% of counselors reported that parents do not attend informational meetings about the Foundation High School Program. In addition, about 10% of counselors reported that language barriers pose a challenge when communicating with parents and students about the Foundation High School Program.

> There's language barriers. We are a school that's predominantly Hispanic, so I think that's a big barrier. A lot of [parents] work in the afternoon, so trying to get them and trying to get that information, we will have to go door to door to get them. But what we've tried to do, what we're doing is, we have a Spanish-speaking secretary; she'll call them individually and invite them. And then we offer our sessions, our parents' sessions, in Spanish.
>
> — Counselor, major suburban high school, Region 10 ESC

Exhibit 2.4. Challenges Counselors Encountered When Communicating With Parents and Students About the Foundation High School Program



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

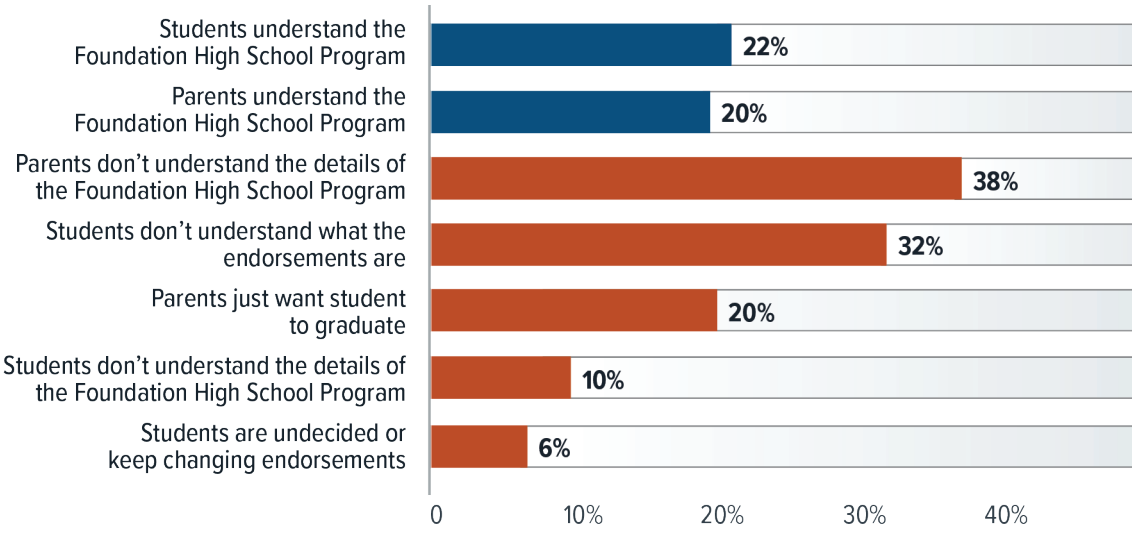
Other communication barriers that counselors reported included parents getting overwhelmed by the level of detail involved in the Foundation High School Program (8%) and parents missing multiple streams of communication (e.g., website, email, one-on-one meetings, Facebook pages, texts, student handbooks) about the Foundation High School Program (8%) (Exhibit 2.4).

Last, 20% of counselors indicated they have not faced any challenges related to communicating about the Foundation High School Program's graduation requirements and endorsement options to students and parents.

2.2.2 Parents' and Students' Understanding of the Foundation High School Program

Counselors were asked whether they thought parents and students had a solid understanding of the endorsements offered at their school and the courses available to complete them. Twenty percent of counselors stated that parents had a solid understanding of the endorsements and associated courses. In addition, 22% of counselors thought students understood the requirements (Exhibit 2.5).

Exhibit 2.5. Extent to Which Parents and Students Understand the Foundation High School Program



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

However, 38% of counselors thought that parents did not understand the details of the graduation requirements and endorsements. Thirty-two percent of counselors said the same about students, noting this issue contributes to challenges in communicating about the Foundation High School Program (Exhibit 2.5).

> For a parent who's hearing it for the first time it sounds foreign. And then you hear it for the second time, and it still may or may not make sense. There's a lot of difficulty with just ensuring that the parents understand, but also that the students understand. Would we love to see more parents involved and asking questions? Absolutely. Does it happen? No.
>
> — Counselor, other central city suburban high school, Region 1 ESC

In addition, about one third of counselors (32%) reported that students do not understand what the endorsements are. An additional 10% of counselors stated that students do not understand the details of the Foundation High School Program. Counselors explained that students understand the courses they are taking and sometimes the pathways, but they do not always understand how courses and pathways align to an endorsement (Exhibit 2.5). For example, a counselor from a high school in a non-metropolitan district noted, "They [students] don't understand [an endorsement] versus they want to take dual credit, and they want to do auto mechanics. They know what programs we offer but not necessarily what an endorsement is."



Chapter 3. Advising Students on the New Graduation Requirements

This chapter summarizes the changes that counselors reported they made to help students navigate the Foundation High School Program, including changes to counseling processes to help students select which components (such as endorsements and courses) of the Foundation High School Program to complete.

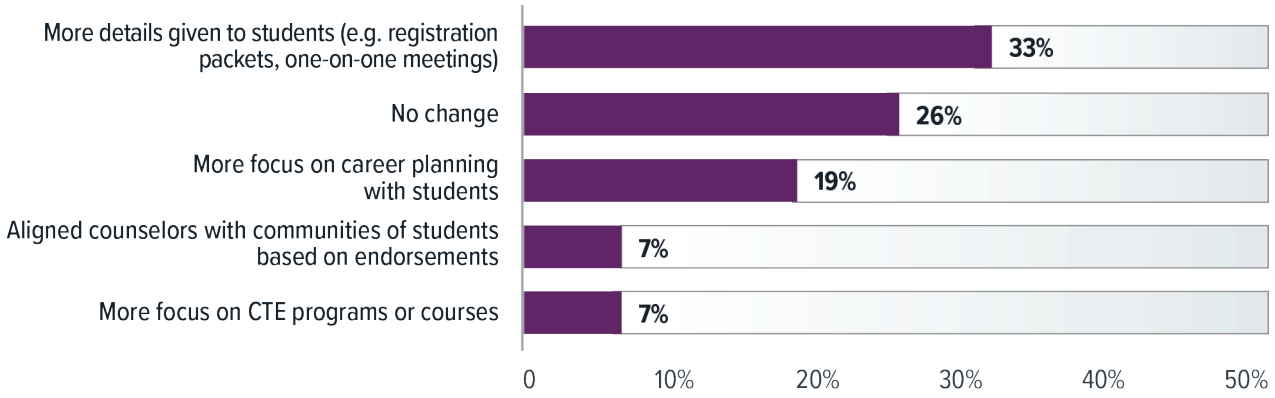
3.1 Changes to Advising Processes

The research team asked 27 counselors who had been employed at their high schools for 4 years or more whether they had changed their processes to help students navigate the new graduation requirements. Seventy-four percent of the counselors reported doing so. Nine counselors (33%) indicated they changed their processes to provide more detailed information to students prior to freshman registration to help them better understand how to select their endorsement (Exhibit 3.1). This information included the creation of registration packets with details on the Foundation High School Program and additional one-on-one meetings with students to discuss registration and scheduling.

> One of the counselors developed a grid for each endorsement area. So that was really helpful in the sense that if a student came in and said, '"I want to follow public service with the focus on health science," 'then we knew which grid to pick, and that's what we followed.
>
> — Counselor, other central city high school, Region 13 ESC

Another counselor from a high school in a central city district noted that their counseling department developed a process for meeting with students to "make sure you discuss their personal graduation plans, what endorsement they're following, [and] make sure that's updated. That's become part of the routine."

Exhibit 3.1. Changes Counselors Made to Their Counseling Processes to Support Students in Navigating the Foundation High School Program



Note. *N* = 27.

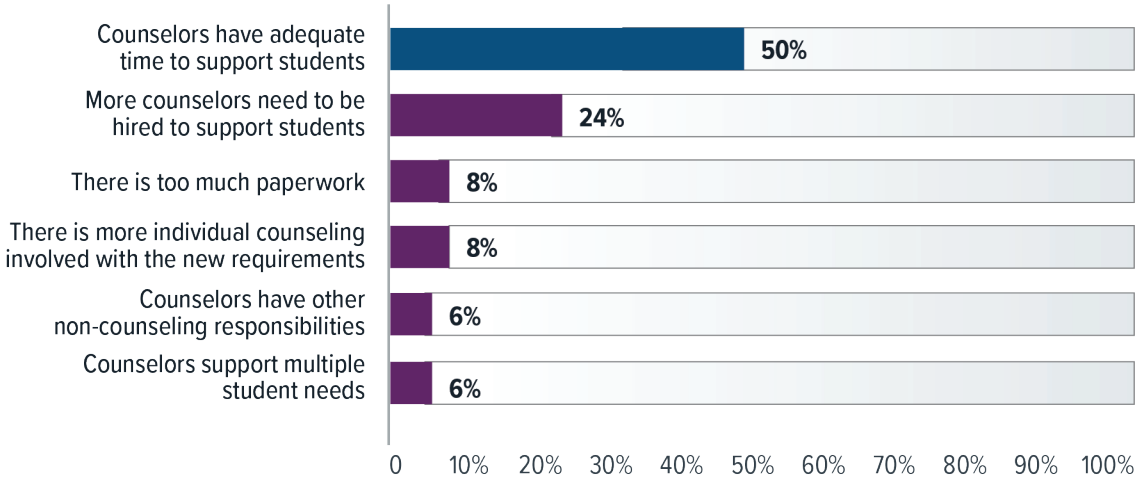
Five counselors (19%) reported focusing more on career planning with students. As one counselor from a high school in a rural district explained, "I spend more time one-on-one with students talking about the future, where they're going, where they see themselves in five years." In addition, 7% of counselors reported spending more time focusing on CTE programs of study or courses when counseling students. Seven percent of counselors also reported that counselors in their schools were now assigned to students based on their endorsements rather than alphabetically or by grade. Last, about one quarter of counselors (26%) reported they had not made any changes to their processes in response to the Foundation High School Program (Exhibit 3.1).

3.2 Adequate Time to Help Students Navigate the Foundation High School Program Graduation Requirements

Counselors play a key role in helping students navigate the transition to college, especially for students who are economically disadvantaged (Belasco, 2013; Bryan et al., 2011; Domina & Woods, 2014).

During the interviews, all 50 counselors were asked whether they feel they have adequate time to support students with navigating the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements. The responses were split: Half the counselors (50%) reported they have adequate time and half reported they do not (Exhibit 3.2). Counselors cited several reasons for needing more time, including too much paperwork associated with the Foundation High School Program (8%) and a need for more individual counseling (8%). In addition, counselors reported that they support multiple student needs beyond academics (e.g., social and emotional counseling) (6%) and that they have other non-counseling duties as well, such as serving as the testing coordinator or supervising the lunchroom (6%). Finally, 24% thought their school should hire more counselors to support students.

Exhibit 3.2. Counselors' Perceptions of Whether They Have Enough Time to Help Students Navigate the Foundation High School Graduation Requirements



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

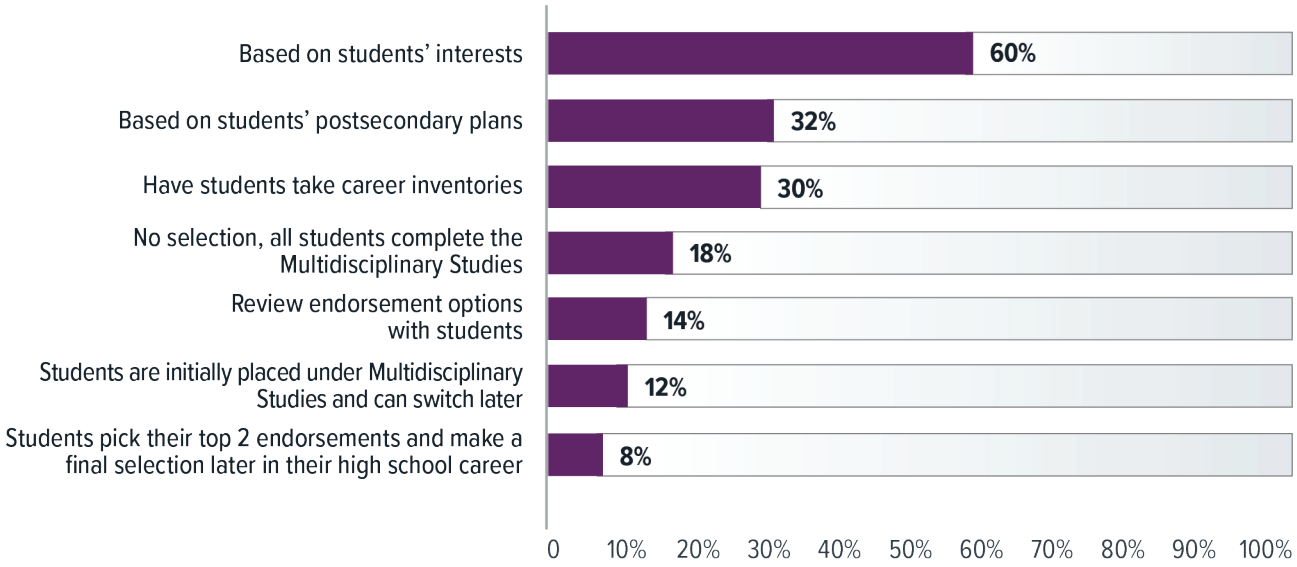
> It's a lot of work on a counselor to keep up with those four-year plans. Every single time they [students] change their plan or their mind, you change their plan. … I mean, the stack of schedule changes is ridiculous. It's supposed to be signed by a parent every time they change it. How do you get that? How do you make that happen when parents won't even bring back the paperwork that's supposed to be brought back for the school year to begin? … So that piece has been very difficult on us for counselors. Just trying to keep up with the paper load.
>
> — Counselor, other central city high school, Region 14 ESC

3.3 Helping Students Select an Endorsement

Under the Foundation High School Program, all students must select an endorsement upon entry into ninth grade. During the interviews, all counselors were asked how they help students select which endorsements to pursue. Most counselors (60%) indicated that students select endorsements based on their interests (Exhibit 3.3).

> We ask, what are you interested in? Are you more hands on? Do you want to learn more from books? Do you have an idea of anything that you may want to become? It's just a matter of asking several questions and trying to find out. Sometimes it's a trial and error.
>
> — Counselor, other central city suburban high school, Region 1 ESC

Exhibit 3.3. Ways Counselors Reported Helping Students Select an Endorsement



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

About one third of counselors (32%) reported that students select endorsements based on their postsecondary plans. Thirty percent of counselors indicated that students complete activities such as online career interest inventories (e.g., Naviance) and then select an endorsement based on the results (Exhibit 3.3).

A subset of counselors (18%) indicated they continue to rely on the former 4×4 graduation plan, either by having all students complete the Multidisciplinary Studies endorsement or by initially placing students in that endorsement and giving them the option to select a different one later (12%). Finally, 8% of counselors stated they have students select their top two endorsements and then make a final decision later in their high school career.

> My question is, "What do you see yourself doing 5 years after you're done with school? What do you want to do?" And I'll say, "In 5, 10 years, where would you like to be?" So usually when I say it that way, I get a real answer. Because if I say, "What do you want to do for a career?" They'll say, "I don't know."
>
> — Counselor, independent town high school, Region 8 ESC

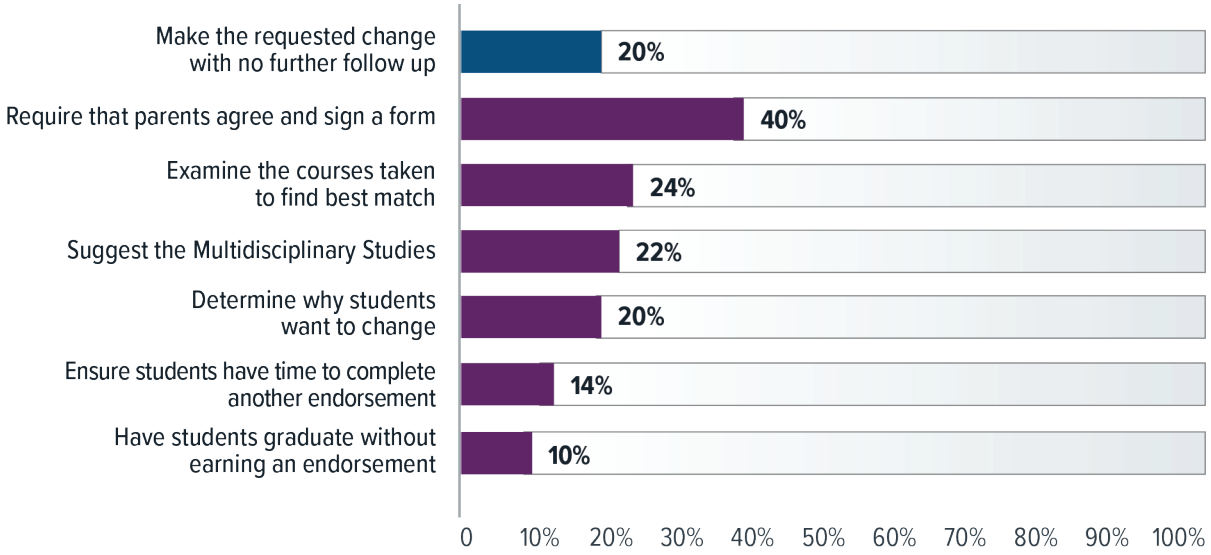
3.3.1 Process and Timeline for Changing an Endorsement

The Foundation High School Program gives students the option to change their endorsement each year. However, students who do so may face multiple changes to their course sequences, which can keep students from successfully completing an endorsement pathway before graduation. To understand how counselors mitigate this problem with students, interviewers asked counselors about the process they go through if a student wants to change their endorsement.

While 20% of counselors indicated they just go ahead and process the paperwork for the requested change (Exhibit 3.4), 40% of counselors indicated parents must be informed and agree to the endorsement change before it occurs. In addition, 20% of counselors indicated they determine the reason why a student wants to change their endorsement before making the switch.

> I never tell them that they can't change their endorsement. I don't stop them because that's not how they're coming to me. They're coming to me about individual classes. I know that with some students, I can say, "No, you need to stay there because this is what you want to do." Other students, keeping them there will cause more of a problem than just going ahead and changing. They can just change. That one is more of a student by student.
>
> — Counselor, other central city suburban high school, Region 5 ESC

Exhibit 3.4. Process Counselors Reported Taking When Helping Students Change Their Endorsement



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

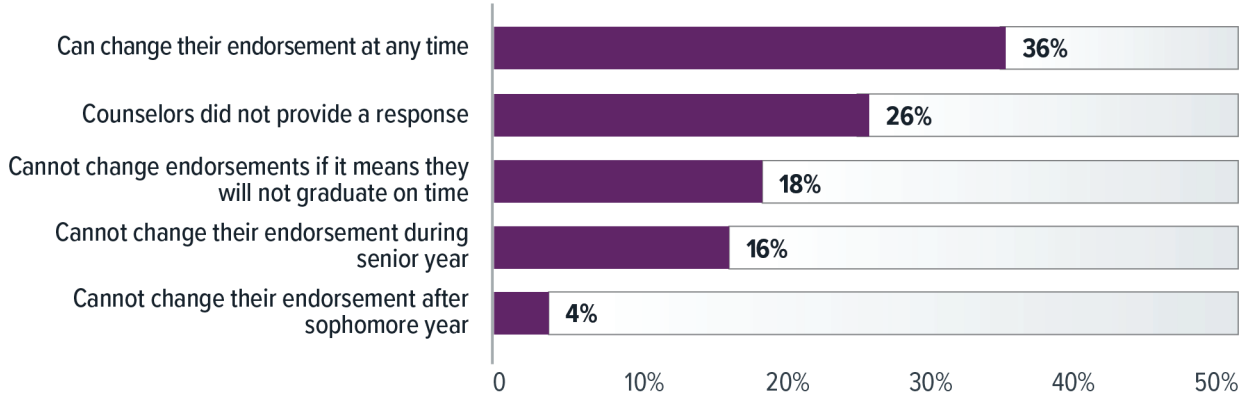
About one quarter of counselors (24%) reported they respond to requests to change an endorsement by examining the courses the student has already taken to determine whether they align with a different endorsement (Exhibit 3.4). A counselor from an urban school described this process as follows: "We just look, 'What have you already done that's another sequence? Oh, you've been in art classes every year since you've been here, so that's an easy endorsement to earn.' We just try to look at creative ways."

A similar percentage of counselors (22%) stated they suggest students select the Multidisciplinary Studies endorsement, particularly if they want to change their endorsement in their junior or senior year. Similarly, 14% of counselors reported making sure students have time to complete another endorsement prior to making changes. Ten percent of counselors indicated they recommend students graduate under the Foundation High School Program without earning an endorsement if they want to make a change late in their high school careers.

Related to timeliness, counselors were asked whether there is a point in time when they tell students they can no longer change their endorsements. About one third of the counselors (36%) indicated there is not (Exhibit 3.5).

These counselors explained that they look at every situation on a case-by-case basis and determine what can be done to make sure students are still interested in their courses and will graduate on time. However, 18% of counselors stated they will not change an endorsement if doing so prevents the student from graduating on time. Likewise, 16% of counselors indicated they will not change a student's endorsement during their senior year. Four percent of counselors stated they will not make the change after a student's sophomore year since it could impact their graduation.

Exhibit 3.5. Timeframe for When Students Can Change Their Endorsement



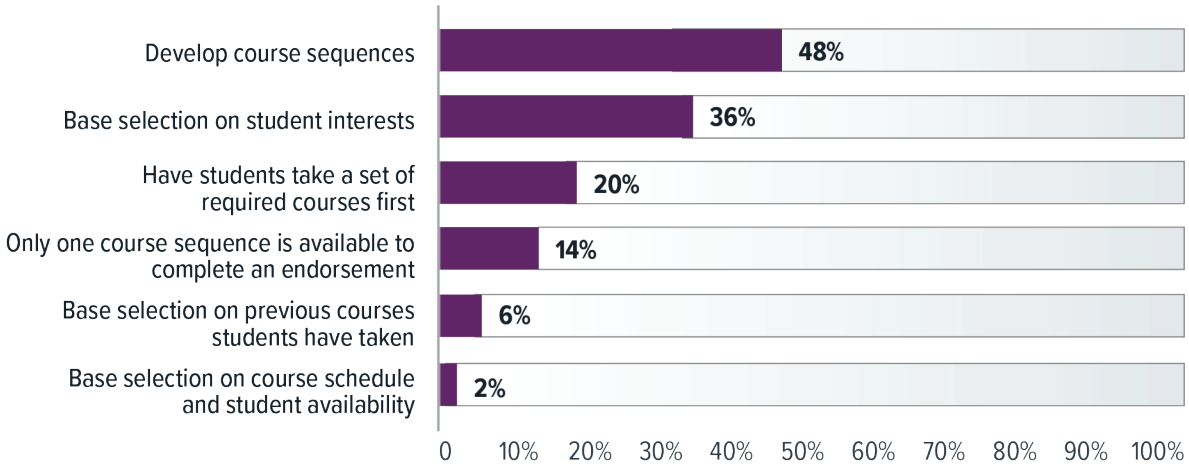
Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

3.3.2 Helping Students Select Courses to Complete an Endorsement

Counselors were asked how they help students select which pathway options to complete to earn an endorsement. Almost half of the counselors (48%) indicated they have developed career pathways with specific course sequences under each endorsement for students to complete (Exhibit 3.6).

> We have in our course guide that we put out, we have some sample sequences. They [students] could still do a little mix and matching. I didn't put every single option, but we kinda just did the majority will follow this sequence. You might do principles of ag[riculture] and then floral design, horticulture, advanced plant science. We try to sequence some courses for them to take, but then sometimes they change their mind and mix or match.
>
> — Counselor, rural high school, Region 3 ESC

Exhibit 3.6. Ways That Counselors Reported Helping Students Select Courses to Complete an Endorsement



Note. *N* = 50. Responses could be coded into multiple categories.

In addition, 36% of counselors indicated that the selection of courses is guided by student interests. For example, one counselor from a suburban school noted that course selection is "based on interest usually, and sometimes they have to pick something they're not really interested in, but they use this as a learning opportunity to expose themself to something new."

Twenty percent of counselors indicated that students must take a set of required courses first before they begin to select courses. Fourteen percent of counselors indicated their school offers only one set of courses to complete an endorsement. Counselors who reported this last scenario were primarily from rural high schools (five of seven counselors), where it is difficult to offer multiple course sequences due to staffing constraints and limited numbers of students to fill the classes. In addition, 6% of counselors indicated that course selection is based on the courses students completed in earlier grades. Two percent of counselors reported that course selection was based on course scheduling and student availability.

> "When we're doing our course offering and we're getting ready for the next year, it's certain things that's nonnegotiable. You going to take this, this, this, and this. If you have not had this, this, this, or this for graduation, put it on your schedule. Some things are nonnegotiable. Then we get to, "Okay, well, I've done all of my other required classes. I have my four core classes in. Now, I still have nine other spaces to fill because we're on block. What do I do?" So then my question comes to them, "Well, what do you want to do?" "Well, I think I want to do engineering. I want to major in engineering."
>
> — Counselor, other central city suburban high school, Region 5 ESC

3.4 Helping Students Earn a Distinguished Level of Achievement

To prepare students for the transition to postsecondary education and employment, the Foundation High School Program encourages students to complete the Distinguished Level of Achievement. Earning a Distinguished Level of Achievement not only ensures that students will take courses that prepare them for college (including Algebra II), but also is required for students to be eligible for automatic admission to a Texas public university under the Top 10 Percent Law.

All counselors were asked how they help students decide whether to earn a Distinguished Level of Achievement. Most counselors (84%) indicated that all their students are expected to complete a Distinguished Level of Achievement unless they are enrolled in special education or an out-of-state transfer.

In addition, many districts continue to encourage students to complete Algebra II, which was a required mathematics course prior to the Foundation High School Program and is still required for entry into most colleges and universities (Mellor et al., 2017). For example, a counselor from a rural high school said, "Well, that's really Algebra II only. And we really run just about all of our kids through Algebra II." Counselors who reported that their school does not expect all students to complete Algebra II indicated that completing the course was decided on a case-by-case basis, often depending on how well students performed in prior mathematics courses. Statewide, slightly more than 80% of 2019–20 high school graduates had completed the Distinguished Level of Achievement (TEA, 2020).



Chapter 4. Impact on Student Opportunities, Preparation, and Outcomes

This chapter summarizes principals' and counselors' perceptions of the impact that the new high school graduation requirements had on student opportunities for expanded career pathways and internships and on students' college and career readiness preparation.

4.1 Career Pathway Opportunities

With an emphasis on career preparation, the Foundation High School Program gives non–college-bound students an opportunity to complete CTE courses in areas that may better align with the students' interests and career goals. During the interviews, counselors were asked whether the Foundation High School Program had allowed their school to create additional career pathway opportunities. About 54% of counselors reported that they thought it had. A counselor from a suburban school said, "I think it opens the door and allows more conversation for opportunities for students that perhaps prior to this they probably wouldn't have known about or wouldn't have had any interest in." Similarly, a counselor from a high school in a district in a central city stated, "Now we have forensic science. We have a math teacher that used to be an architect, and she now does architecture and engineering."

> "With our new CTE building, we've got fashion design. We've got culinary arts, forensic science. So they [students] get a good taste of it, I feel, with the CTE. Our woodworking and welding area is phenomenal, and vet tech. So I think it [the Foundation High School Program] has definitely added a very nice concentration of courses that kids can get involved in."
>
> — Counselor, independent town high school, Region 8 ESC

The remaining 46% of counselors indicated that implementation of the Foundation High School Program has not allowed their school to create additional career pathway opportunities, primarily because their schools were not able to offer additional courses, usually due to staffing issues. As a counselor in a rural high school noted, "The challenging part to a small school is to fit those in, especially when the staff has certain obligations that are

outside of those teaching fields, and you're relying on one staff to teach that endorsement." About half of the schools that did not create additional career pathway opportunities were schools in rural areas or schools with a specialized focus, such as Fine Arts or Early College High Schools.

4.2 Internship Opportunities

Internships and work-based learning opportunities help prepare students for the transition to postsecondary education and a career. Principals were asked whether they had any connections or regular communication with local businesses or industries in order to offer coursework, internships, or apprenticeships to students.

Of those principals who had been at their school for 4 years or more, most (17 principals or 85%) had connections with local businesses prior to the implementation of the Foundation High School Program. Most of these internships and employment opportunities were credit-bearing or related to specific courses or pathways offered at the school. One principal at a high school in a central city district had a relationship with a local welding company that hired students for internships and full-time jobs.

Of the remaining principals who had been at their schools 4 years or more but who had no connections with local businesses, most had plans to build connections in the future and identified local businesses with whom they would like to develop partnerships. Likewise, a third of the principals who had been at their school for less than 4 years reported their school does not have regular connections to local businesses, industries, or postsecondary institutions, but they have plans to make these types of connections in the future.

Counselors were asked whether their students had opportunities to participate in paid or unpaid internships. More than half of the counselors interviewed (60%) indicated that their students have opportunities to participate in internships. Most of these opportunities come from local businesses, such as hospitals, restaurants, construction companies, and others.

Some counselors reported that the schools themselves offer internship opportunities. As a counselor from an urban high school explained, "The district actually pays them [students]. They work in our offices. You may see some of them here or there. We have them in all the offices. They work at all the schools."

> We actually have several programs on campus that are classes that actually involve internship. We have a BEST program, so those students are in elementary and middle schools several days a week. It's their coursework, but they're basically in a classroom with a teacher helping the whole time. Then we have a Research and Design Program that partners with the University of Texas Medical Branch. It fluctuates year to year how many students are accepted, but they're actually working with master's-leveled research scientists at the hospital doing research with them. We also have a Career Connect program where students can choose different pathways through them, like PCT [patient care tech], EMT, some engineering, welding, to where those students get to do either job shadows or internships during the summer or during the school year.
>
> — Counselor, other central city high school, Region 4 ESC

Counselors mentioned internship opportunities with local universities, police and fire departments, and elected officials. Most schools that currently offer internships had been offering them before the implementation of the Foundation High School Program. However, a few counselors indicated that the program had helped them solidify their internship programs.

Of the 40% of counselors who indicated their students do not have an opportunity to participate in paid or unpaid internships, slightly more than half explained it was due to limited business and industry in proximity to the school. Of these 20 schools, 14 (70%) are in rural areas. As a counselor from a rural high school explained, "We are such a small community, we don't have a big industry here that would pull people and pull our students in."

Other barriers to internships included transportation, student schedules, and lack of staffing or time to execute an internship program. As a counselor from a rural high school expressed, "Because we are so far away from everyone else, the transportation takes a while, and with a 45-minute class period, it kind of limits what we can do. Then the staff as well. We don't have enough staff to make sure they can go out and check."

4.3 College and Career Preparation

The Foundation High School Program is designed to give students the flexibility to pursue their interests while ensuring that students graduate ready to succeed in college, a career, or the military.

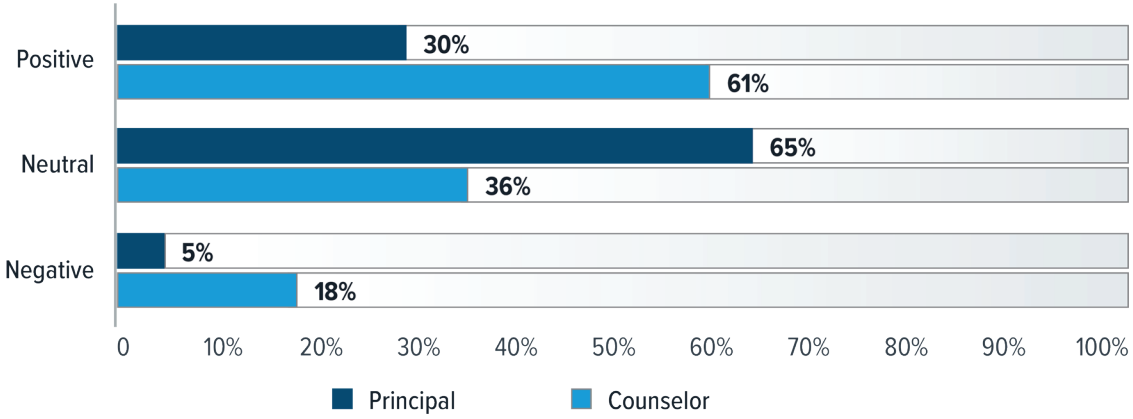
4.3.1 Impact of the Foundation High School Program on Students

Interviewers asked principals and counselors who had been at their schools for 4 years or more whether the impact of the new graduation requirements on students had been positive, negative, or neutral. Most principals (65%) thought the impact on students had been neutral, whereas most counselors (61%) thought the impact had been positive (Exhibit 4.1).

> "I think for the students, I would just say neutral, just because I don't feel they get it. When you're asking a student to try to think of a four-year plan at such a young age, I don't think they truly realize what that means, and really their freshman year, they're trying everything to see what they like and what really, truly interests them. I think it's difficult, so to me, I think they think, "Oh this is just something we have to do," and then they don't think about it again. [When it was the 4x4], I think they just knew they had to take four of everything. I mean it's just, "Really I've got to do that? Okay.""
>
> — Principal, other central city high school, Region 14 ESC

Principals who thought the impact on students had been neutral primarily noted that students did not seem to completely understand how the changes have affected their experiences in high school.

Exhibit 4.1. Principal and Counselor Perceptions of the Impact of the Foundation High School Program on Students



Note. *N* = 20 principals and 27 counselors.

Counselors who thought the new graduation requirements had a positive impact on students reported that the Foundation High School Program contributed to more in-depth conversations with students about their future. One counselor from an urban high school stated, "I'm a fan of the conversation of let's talk about how what you take in high school can help you beyond. I also really like the idea of not every student needs to go to college. They don't. They need to be prepared with the skills to go to work."

Similarly, a counselor from an urban high school said, "I like a lot of the changes because I think the intent is to get kids thinking more of post–high school. Getting them a set of skills versus just choosing whatever elective pops in my head that I wanna take that year, and so I like that intent about it. The flip side is just a management piece. It's a lot to manage, it's more complicated, it's more time consuming."

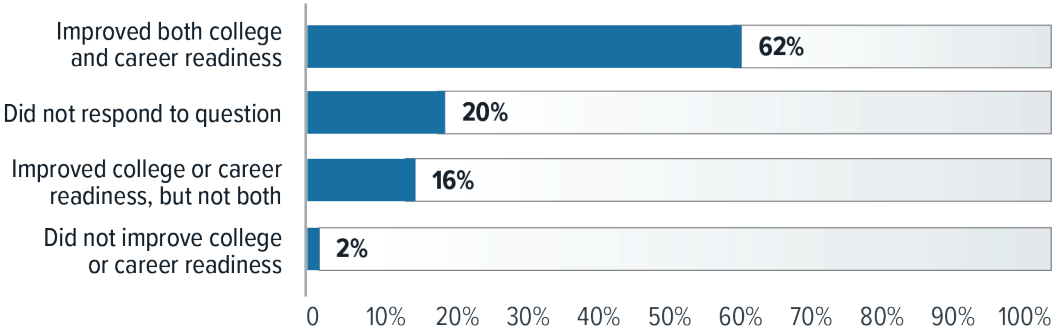
Other counselors indicated that the Foundation High School Program had given their school more focus. For example, a counselor from a central city high school noted, "It allows us to really tailor what's going to be best for them, and I like that a lot."

Counselors who reported the impact of the Foundation High School Program on students had been negative found the new requirements to be restrictive, making statements such as students "can't try new things" or students "have to choose a major in high school." One counselor noted that the course requirements are less rigorous, but that students still need to pass end-of-course exams and should be taking courses to pass those exams.

4.3.2 Extent to Which the New Graduation Requirements Prepare Students for College and Career

Interviewers asked all principals to describe the extent to which the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements helped prepare students for college and a career. Thirty-one principals (62%) reported the new graduation requirements had improved both the college and career readiness of their students. Eight principals (16%) thought the new requirements had helped prepare students for *either* college or a career but had not prepared students for both (Exhibit 4.2).

Exhibit 4.2. Principals' Perceptions of the Extent to Which the Foundation High School Program Requirements Helped Prepare Students for College and Career



Note. *N* = 50.

One principal, who indicated the changes to the high school graduation requirements had a slightly negative impact on college readiness, expressed concern that students were no longer required to take 4 years of English and math, which could lead students to struggle in their transition to college.

Still another principal expressed his opinion that the Foundation High School Program had the same influence on the college and career readiness of students as the previous graduation requirements because his school basically follows the old 4×4 program and places most students into the Multidisciplinary Studies endorsement.

> I think it does a really good job because it defines those pathways for the students to begin, for lack of better term, framing their understanding of what careers are out there, whether it be military as part—we do have military representatives come out here—or technology, arts, education. … It [Foundation High School Program] helps define what the opportunities are that are out there for our kids. And we do want them to reach out for those non–4-year degree certifications as well, because there are a lot of great programs, local community colleges, that offer great opportunities for careers.
>
> — Principal, other central city suburban, Region 1 ESC



Chapter 5. Students' Reactions to the Foundation High School Program

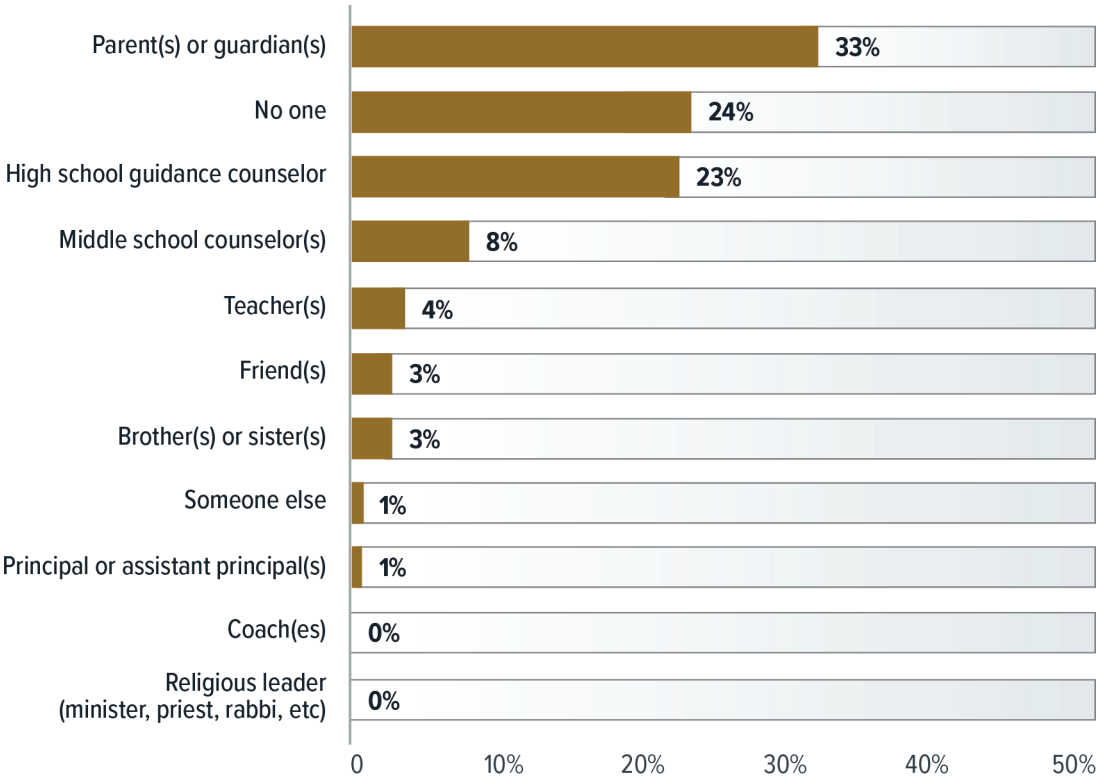
This chapter summarizes students' understanding of the components of the Foundation High School Program and the courses required to complete those components. In addition, this chapter summarizes students' satisfaction with the endorsements, including the pathways offered, and students' perceptions of how those endorsements help link what they learned in high school with life after high school. As noted, the research team administered a survey to all Grade 12 students in the 50 high schools to collect this information (see Appendix C for the Grade 12 student survey).

5.1 Endorsement Selection Process

Upon entering Grade 9, all Texas public school students are required to select an endorsement to pursue during high school. An endorsement consists of a sequence of courses that provides in-depth knowledge of a subject area. In addition, all CTE programs of study lead to an endorsement. Students may earn more than one endorsement, although districts are not required to offer all five endorsements available under the Foundation High School Program. If a district does offer only one endorsement, it must be Multidisciplinary Studies (TEC § 28.025 (c-4)).

Through the survey, students were first asked a series of questions about who helped them select an endorsement and the kinds of activities and resources they consulted to assist with the process. About one third of the students (33%) indicated their parent or guardian helped them the most in selecting an endorsement their freshman year (Exhibit 5.1). Another 23% of students indicated their high school guidance counselor helped them the most, while another 24% of students indicated no one helped them select an endorsement.

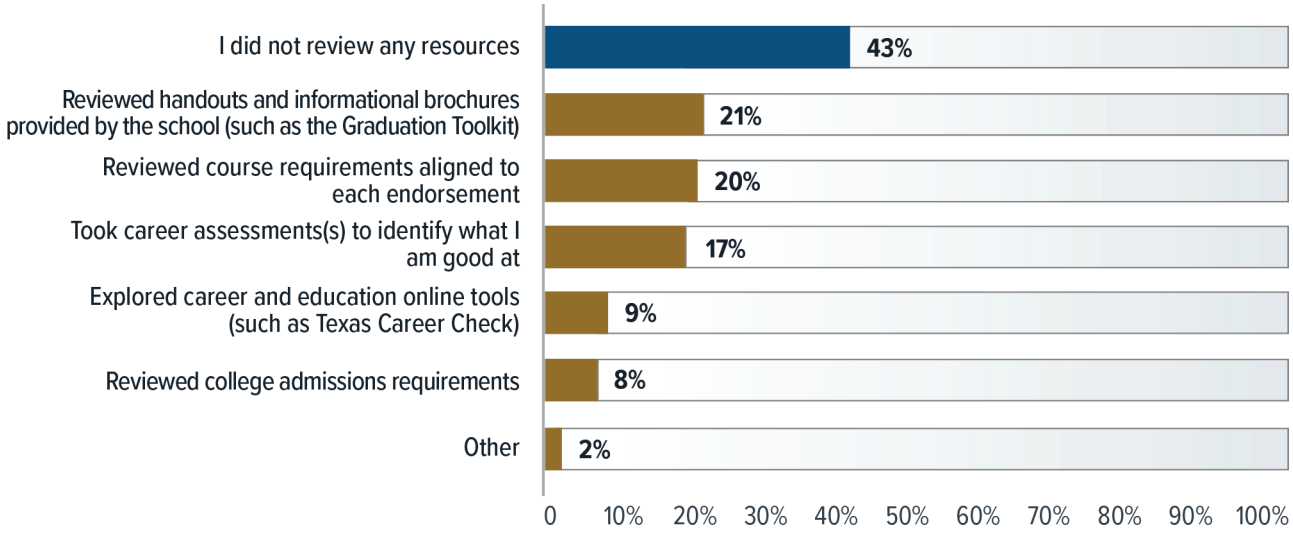
Exhibit 5.1. Individuals Students Reported Who Helped Them the Most With Selecting an Endorsement



Note. *N* = 5,651.

For assistance with selecting an endorsement, 57% of students indicated they reviewed resources, including handouts and informational brochures, course requirements, career assessments and online tools, or college admissions requirements. However, 43% of students did not review any resources (Exhibit 5.2).

Exhibit 5.2. Resources Students Reported Reviewing to Assist in Selecting an Endorsement

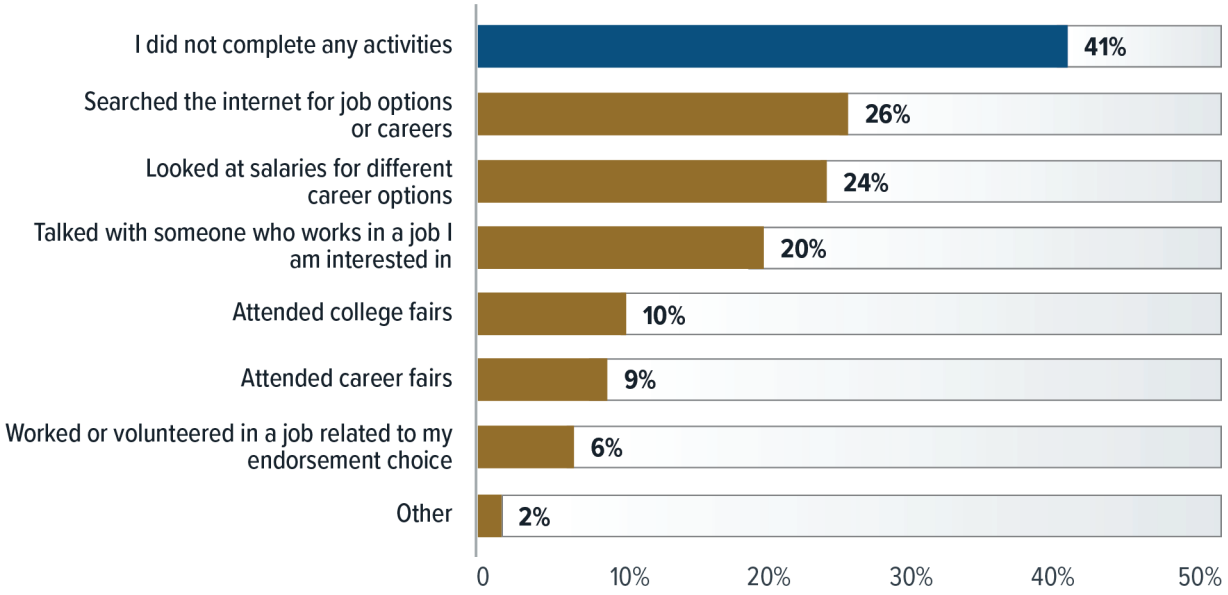


Note. *N* = 5,651. Students may select more than one response.

In addition, almost 60% of students indicated they completed some type of activity to help them select an endorsement, including searching the internet for job options or careers (26%), reviewing salaries for different career options (24%), or talking with someone who works in a job they are interested in (20%) (Exhibit 5.3).

Most students (78%) indicated their high school offered their first-choice endorsement. Seventy-four percent of students indicated they were completing or pursuing the endorsement they selected in Grade 9.

Exhibit 5.3. Activities Students Reported Completing to Assist in Selecting an Endorsement

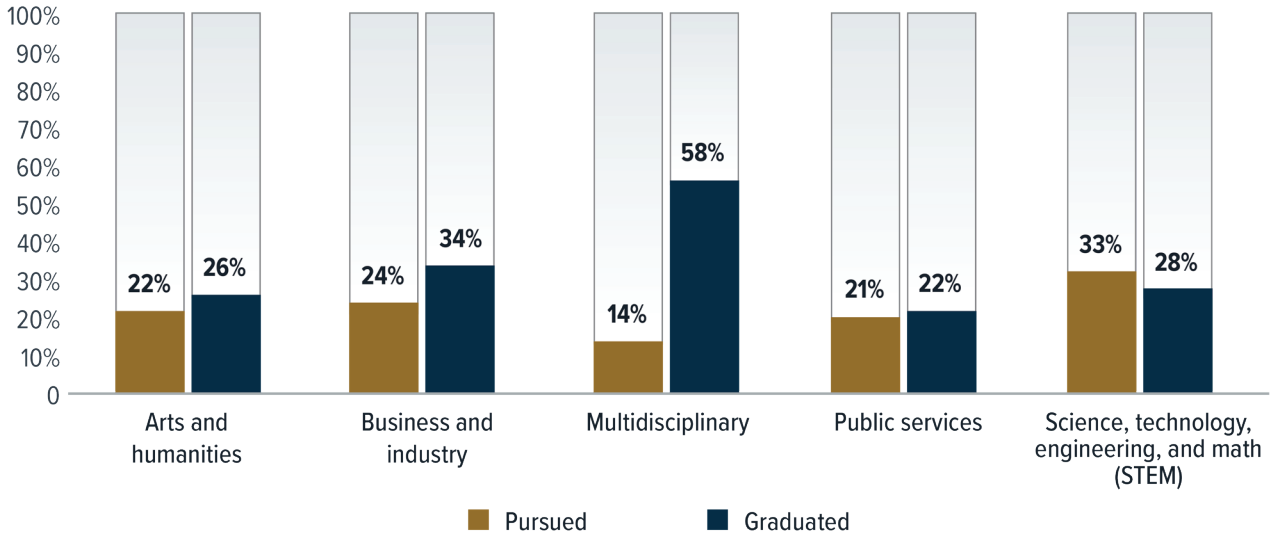


Note. *N* = 5,651. Students may select more than one response.

5.2 Types of Endorsements Completed

The survey asked the students to indicate the endorsements they had completed or were currently pursuing before graduation. The research team then used student administrative records to confirm the endorsements that students had completed at graduation. Exhibit 5.4 presents a side-by-side comparison of the endorsements that students said they were planning to complete versus the endorsements they completed by graduation. For the most part, students ended up completing the endorsements they were pursuing. However, more students completed Multidisciplinary Studies by graduation than they had indicated early in their senior year. This is likely due to students earning the additional endorsement or switching endorsements late in high school and, thus, not having enough time to complete a sequence of courses in a career area.

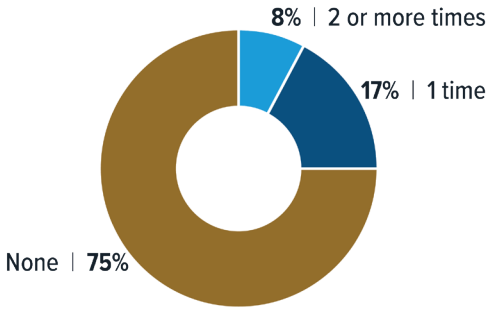
Exhibit 5.4. Types of Endorsements Students Indicated Pursuing and Completing by High School Graduation



Note. *N* = 5,633. Students may pursue and complete more than one endorsement.

Three of the five endorsements—Business and Industry, Public Services, and STEM—have a CTE pathway for completing the endorsement. Student administrative records showed that 68% of seniors from the 50 high schools completed a CTE pathway by earning three or more CTE credits in a program of study. Through the survey, 25% of students reported they switched their endorsement one or more times during high school (Exhibit 5.5).

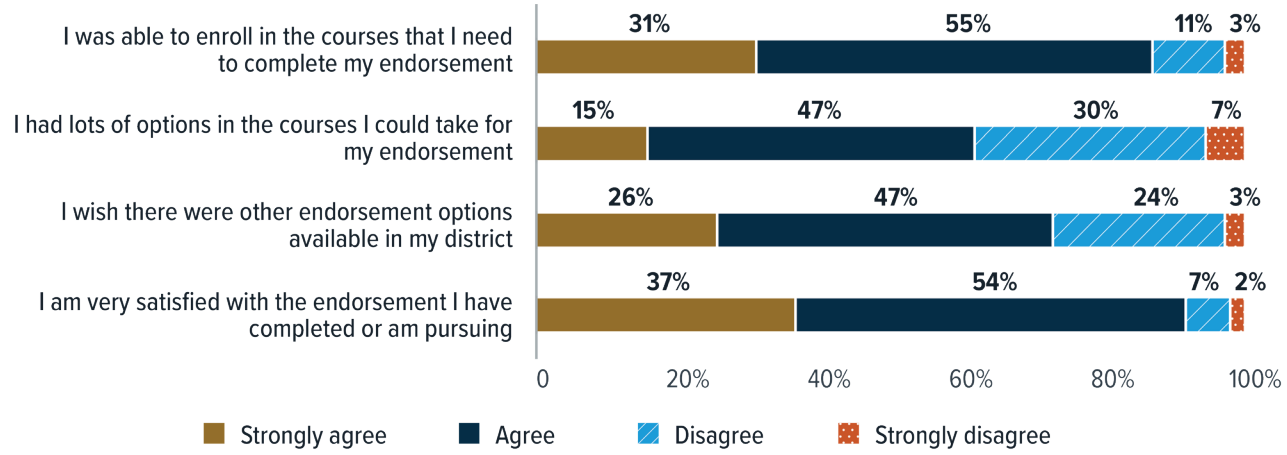
Exhibit 5.5. Number of Times Students Reported Switching Their Endorsement



Note. *N* = 5,651.

At the same time, the majority of students (91%) reported being satisfied with the endorsement they were pursuing. However, 73% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they wished their district offered more endorsement options (Exhibit 5.6).

Exhibit 5.6. Student Satisfaction With Endorsement Options

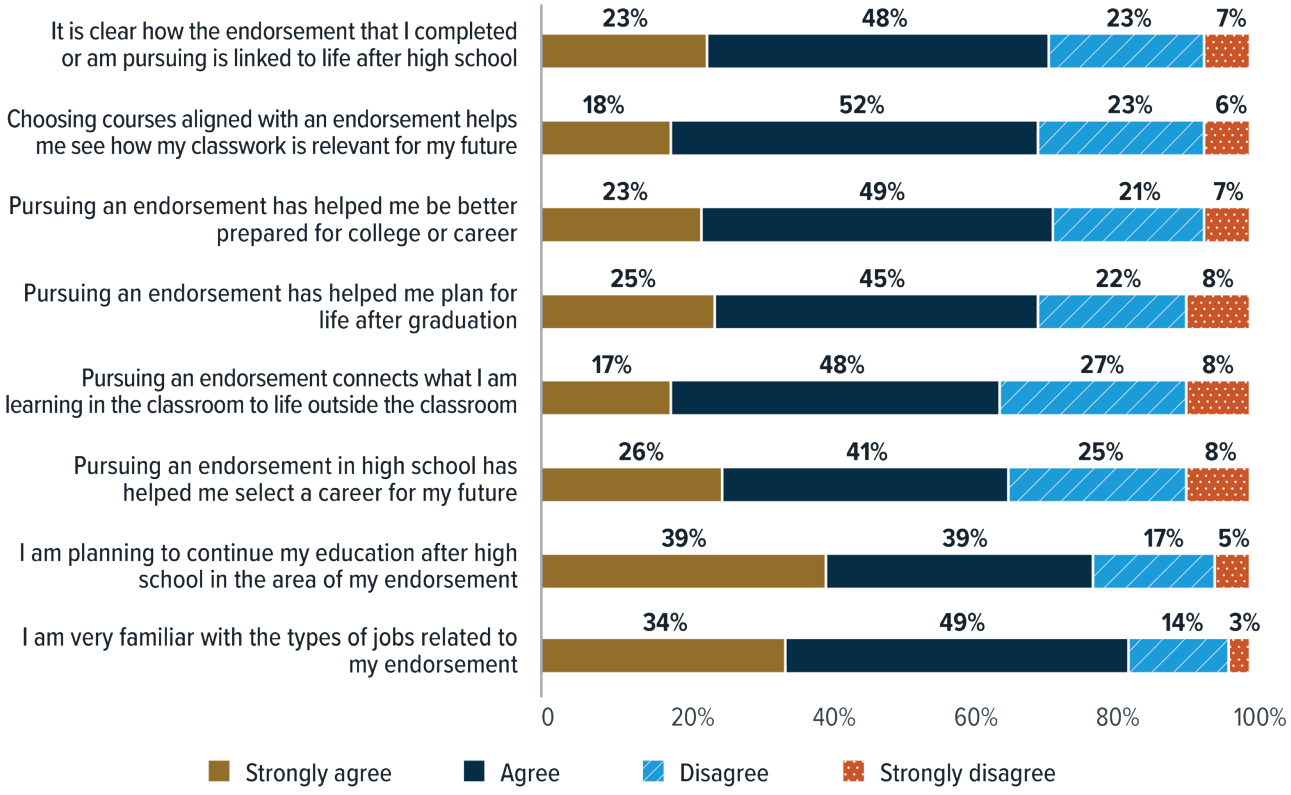


Note. The number of students responding to each item ranged from 4,872 to 4,964.

5.3 Connecting Course Pathways to Future Plans

Results from the student survey revealed that the majority of students (83%) were familiar with the type of jobs related to their endorsement. Seventy-eight percent of students were planning to continue their education after high school in the endorsement area (Exhibit 5.7).

Exhibit 5.7. Students' Perceptions of the Relationship of Their Endorsement and Future Plans

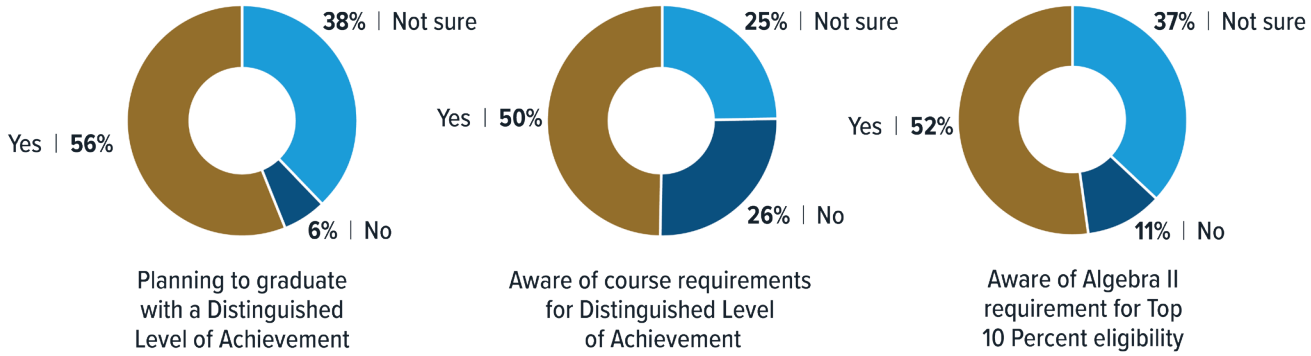


Note. The number of students responding to each item ranged from 4,755 to 4,945.

Although only 56% of seniors reported they were planning to graduate with a Distinguished Level of Achievement, graduation records from TEA confirmed that 86% of seniors actually did so. This increase is likely due to students' lack of understanding of the course requirements needed to complete the Distinguished Level of Achievement, as only half the seniors (50%) indicated they were aware of them (Exhibit 5.8).

To complete the Distinguished Level of Achievement, students must complete Algebra II. Course completion records from TEA confirmed that 91% of seniors took and passed Algebra II, thus completing the Distinguished Level of Achievement. During the interviews, counselors reported that their students were completing the Distinguished Level of Achievement because Algebra II was a required mathematics course in their high school.

Exhibit 5.8. Students' Reported Awareness of Course Requirements for Components of the Foundation High School Program



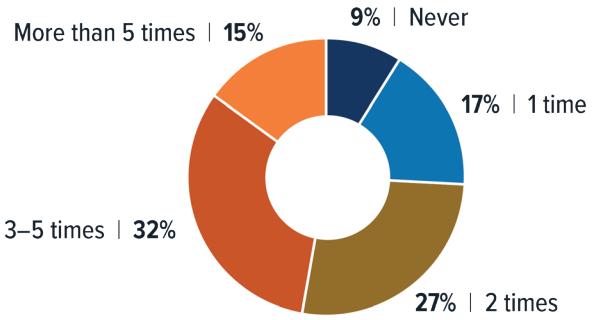
Note. The number of students responding to each item ranged from 5,057 to 5,097.

Algebra II is a requirement for eligibility for the Top 10 Percent automatic college admission policy for Texas public colleges and universities. This policy offers automatic admission to state-funded universities to Texas high school students who graduate in the top 10% of their class. About half of the students (52%) were aware of the Algebra II requirement for the Top 10 Percent automatic college admission eligibility (Exhibit 5.8).

5.4 College and Career Advising

College and career readiness begins long before high school exit. Providing students with guidance throughout their high school years could positively influence postsecondary outcomes (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). The survey asked students how many times they had met with their high school counselor in their junior year (the previous year). About one quarter of students (26%) indicated they had met with their counselor once or not at all, 27% had met with their counselor two times, 32% had met with their counselor three to five times, and 15% had met with their counselor more than five times (Exhibit 5.9).

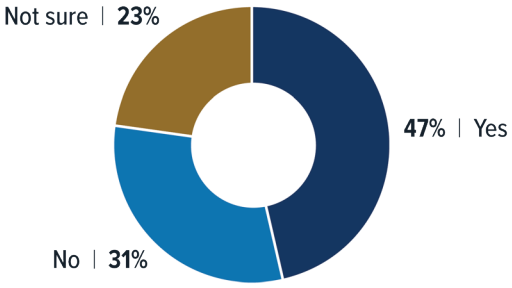
Exhibit 5.9. Number of Times Students Met With Their Counselor in Their Junior Year (Grade 11)



Note. *N* = 5,533.

The survey asked students about their interactions with their high school guidance counselor and the kinds of activities students completed with their counselor. In Texas, students are required to complete a personal graduation plan, either in middle or high school. Fewer than half (47%) of students indicated they had completed a personal graduation plan, 30% indicated they had not completed one, and 23% were not sure (Exhibit 5.10).

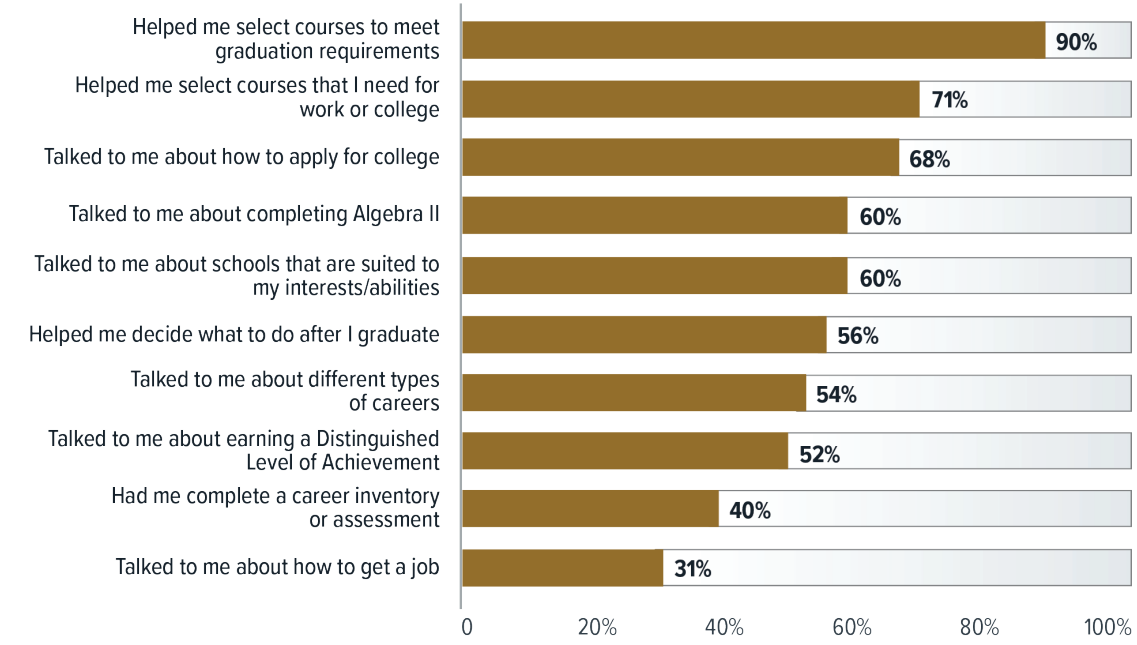
Exhibit 5.10. Percentage of Students Who Reported Having Completed Personal Graduation Plans With Their High School Guidance Counselor



Note. *N* = 5,532.

Note that students may not have been aware they were completing personal graduation plans with their guidance counselor, or the high school may have called it something other than a personal graduation plan. During the interviews, counselors discussed putting together 4-year plans with students that mapped out endorsements and sequences of courses for graduation. Students did report (90%) selecting courses for graduation as one of the planning activities they conducted with their counselor (Exhibit 5.11).

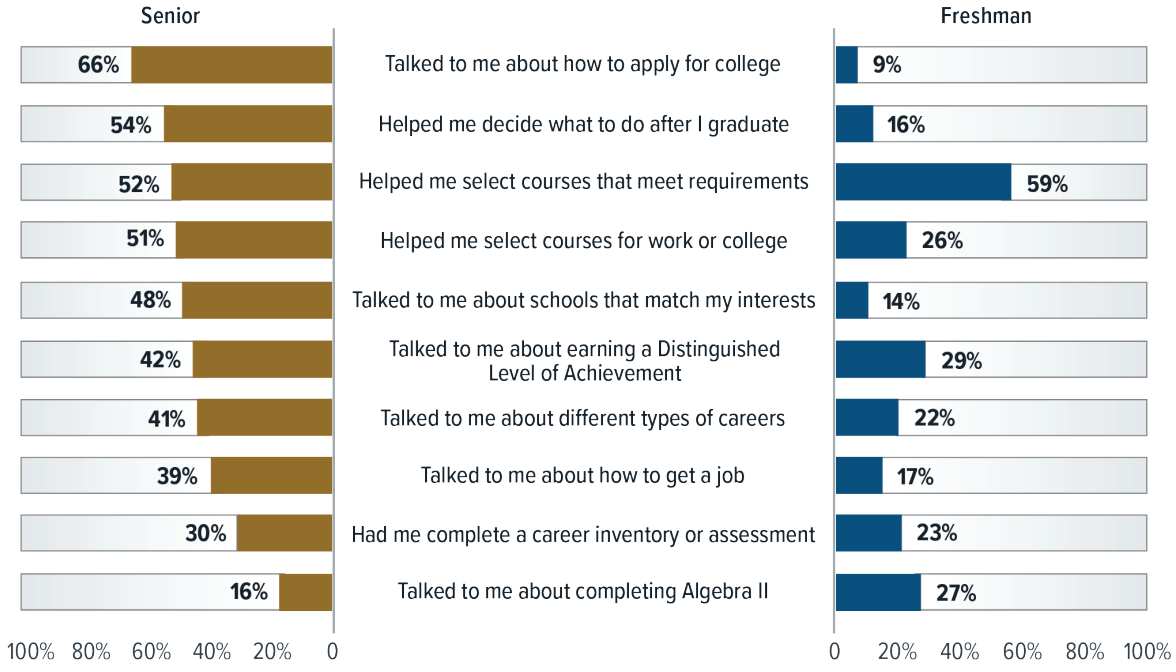
Exhibit 5.11. High School Planning Activities Students Reported Conducting With Their Counselor



Note. *N* = 5,651. Students may select more than one response.

Along with indicating which activities students conducted with their counselor, students reported the years they conducted each activity. Students noted doing only one of the high school planning activities—selecting courses to meet graduation requirements—during both their freshman and senior years. All other planning activities took place during either students' freshman or senior year, but not both, with variation across students. For example, 9% of students reported talking to their counselor about how to apply for college during their freshman year, while about two thirds (66%) of students reported doing this activity in their senior year (Exhibit 5.12).

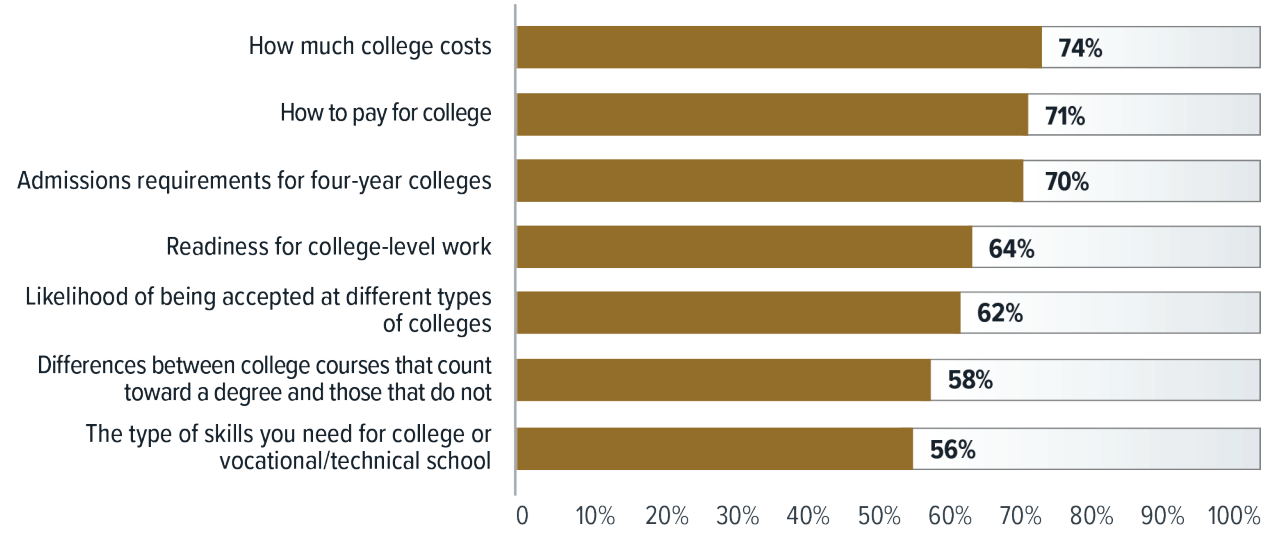
Exhibit 5.12. When Students Reported Conducting High School Planning Activities With Their Counselor



Note. *N* = 5,651.

Similarly, students were asked if and when they conducted college planning activities with their counselor. Over half of students reported conducting some type of activity with their counselor to plan for college (Exhibit 5.13).

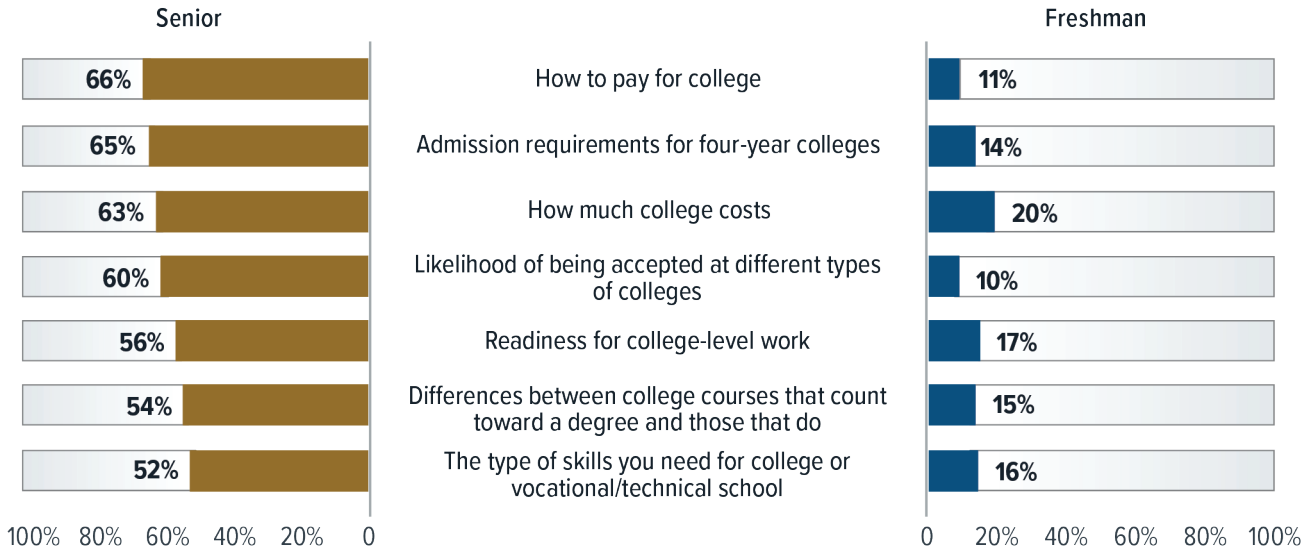
Exhibit 5.13. College Planning Activities Students Reported Conducting With Their Counselor



Note. *N* = 5,651.

Students also indicated when various college planning activities with their counselor took place. About 20% or fewer students reported talking with their counselor during their freshman year about admission requirements for 4-year colleges, readiness for college-level work, or the types of skills you need for college or vocational/technical school. However, more than half of students reported planning for college with their counselor during their senior year (Exhibit 5.14).

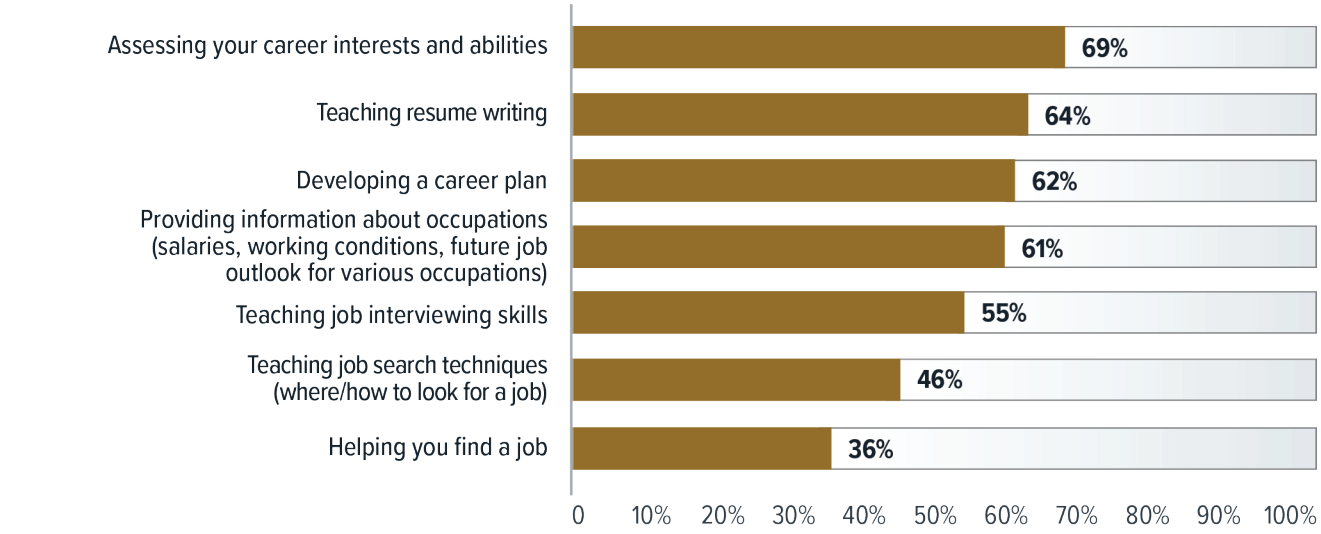
Exhibit 5.14. When Students Reported Conducting College Planning Activities With Their Counselor



Note. *N* = 5,651.

When students were asked about the types of career planning activities they conducted with their counselor, 36% of students reported their counselor helped them find a job (Exhibit 5.15).

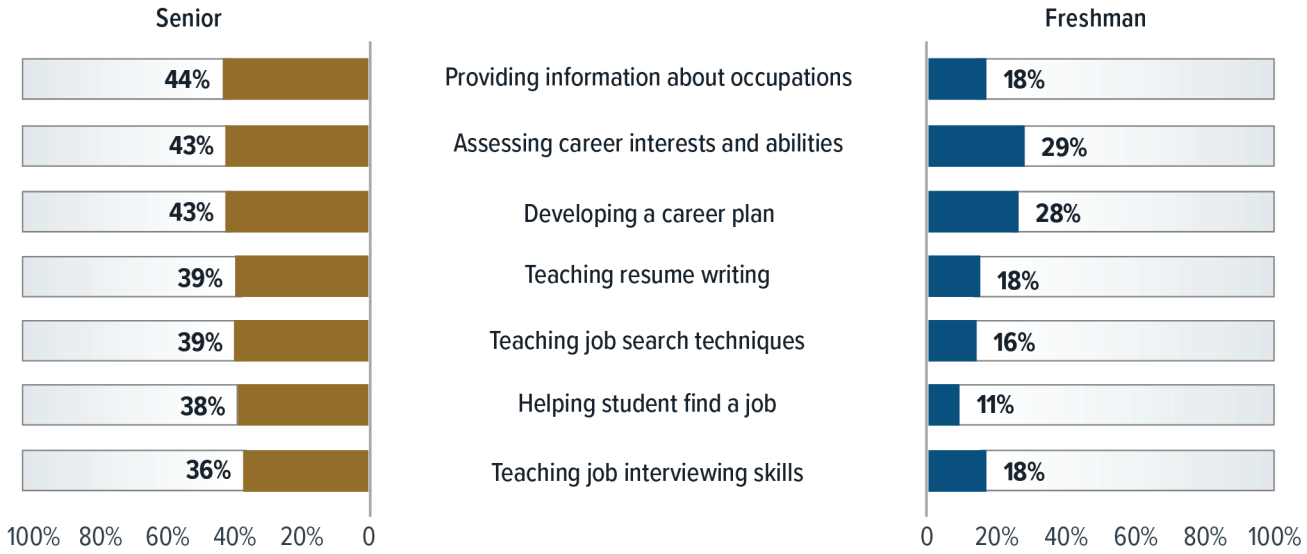
Exhibit 5.15. Career Planning Activities Students Reported Conducting With Their Counselor



Note. *N* = 5,651.

When asked when they talked with their counselor about planning for a career, similar patterns emerged with fewer students reporting planning with their counselor during their freshman year versus their senior year (Exhibit 5.16).

Exhibit 5.16. Career Planning Students Reported Conducting With Their Counselor

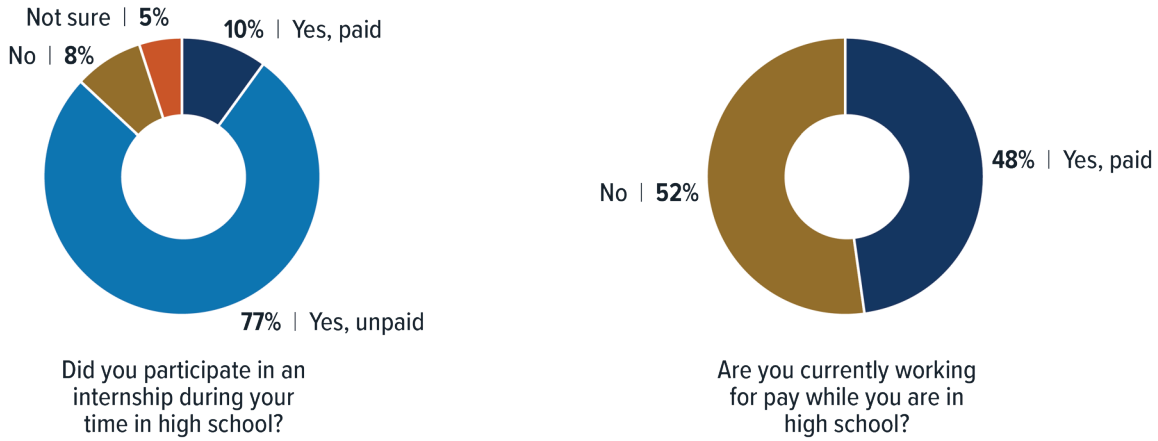


Note. *N* = 5,651.

5.5 Students' Future Plans

To better understand students' experiences with workforce opportunities, the survey included questions about students' participation in internships and paid jobs. While 77% of students reported participating in an unpaid internship during high school, about 48% of students reported working for pay during high school (Exhibit 5.17).

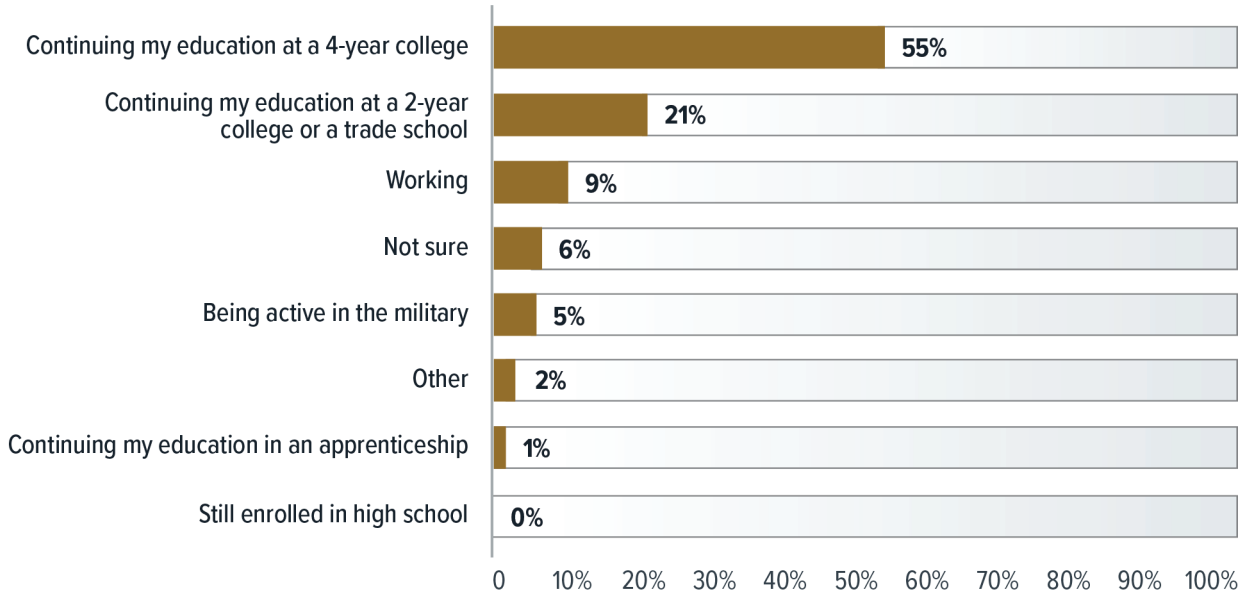
Exhibit 5.17. Students' Reported Experiences With Workforce Opportunities



Note. *N* = 5,532.

When asked what they would be doing after their senior year, 76% of students reported they planned to continue their education at a 2- or 4-year college (Exhibit 5.18). This rate is seven percentage points higher than the national immediate college enrollment rate of 69% for 2018 high school graduates. However, in tracking the students' college enrollment during the 2019 fall semester, after their graduation, the research team found that only 28% of the students had enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college in Texas. While a certain percentage of the students may have attended college outside of the state, 2017 data show that 90% of Texas high school graduates who enrolled in college did so in Texas (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2017).

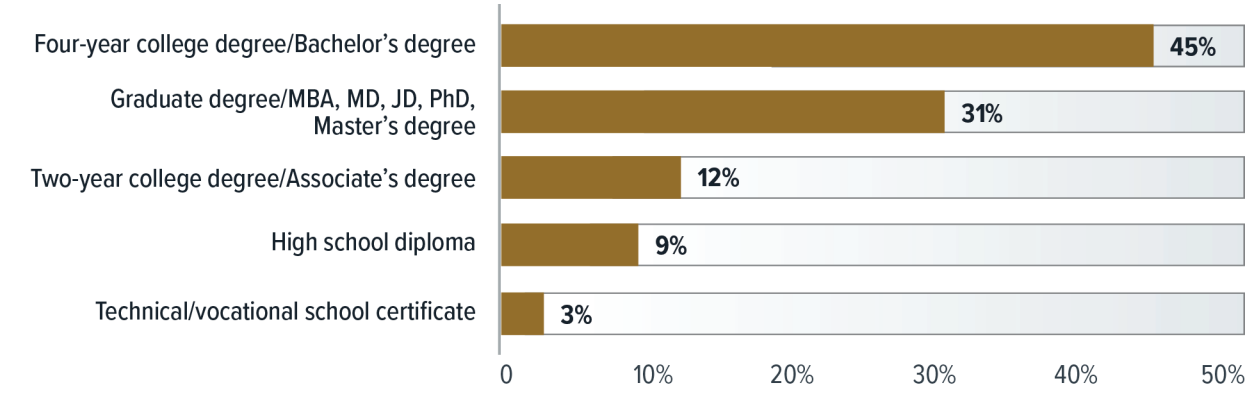
Exhibit 5.18. Students' Reported Plans After Their Senior Year of High School (Grade 12)



Note. *N* = 5,485.

When students were asked about the highest level of education they plan to complete, 91% indicated some kind of postsecondary education, whether a 2- or 4-year college or some form of technical or vocational training (Exhibit 5.19).

Exhibit 5.19. Students' Reported Future Plans



Note. *N* = 5,446.



Chapter 6. Summary of Findings and Next Steps

Interviews with principals and counselors at 50 randomly selected Texas public high schools in 2018–19 examined districts' implementation of the Foundation High School Program and the consequences of the new graduation requirements for staffing, communication, partnerships, and students' college and career readiness and outcomes. A survey of 5,651 Grade 12 students at the 50 schools also explored seniors' reactions to the graduation requirements.

Findings from the high school visits have several implications for TEA to consider as they support school systems in improving outcomes for all public school students.

High School Curriculum and Staffing

The 50 high schools varied in the number of career-area endorsements they offered. Almost three quarters (72%) of the schools opted to offer *all five* endorsements. To meet the new requirements, principals reported making curriculum and staffing changes, with a mostly neutral impact on staff. However, both principals and counselors stated a need for more funding, staff, and training. Teacher shortages, especially in the state's rural districts, limited the quantity and quality of endorsement options that could be offered to students.

Recommended next steps. In alignment with *Strategic Priority One: Recruit, Support, and Retain Teachers and Principals* of the agency's strategic plan, TEA should continue to support districts with programs like *Grow Your Own* that help district leaders identify teacher candidates and provide them with training and financial support to help obtain the education and certifications they need to become a teacher. TEA also may want to explore policies to support districts in hiring more counselors and in streamlining their tasks so that counselors may focus on providing education and career counseling to students.

Communicating With Parents and Students About the Foundation High School Program

Principals and counselors reported using a range of methods to share information about the Foundation High School Program with school staff, caregivers, and students. However, despite these efforts, these groups often did not seem to have a firm grasp of the graduation requirement details.

Recommended next steps. In alignment with *Strategic Priority Three: Connect High School to Career and College* of the agency's strategic plan, TEA should continue efforts to support districts in helping middle and high school students plan for college and career success through processes such as developing personal graduation plans. Defining and revisiting students' career goals and postsecondary plans, both before and throughout high school, provides multiple opportunities for school staff to have more targeted conversations with students and parents. In addition, TEA should consider strategies, such as targeted training and informational campaigns, to expand and deepen understanding of the graduation requirements among staff, students, and families.

Advising Students on the Graduation Requirements

Counselors reported making several changes to help students navigate the Foundation High School Program, including changes to advising processes to help students select which career-area endorsements and course pathways to complete. Half the counselors reported they had adequate time to help students navigate the new graduation requirements and half reported they did not.

Recommended next steps. In alignment with *Strategic Priority Three: Connect High School to Career and College* of the agency's strategic plan, TEA may want to develop and implement an effective advising framework to expand the amount and reach of college and career advising for all students without overburdening school counselors. Typically, college and career advising has been the role of the school counselor. However, an increase in demand for other student supports can limit the amount of time counselors have to advise students. Training additional school staff on college and career advising has the potential to surround students with more adults who can help them explore and work toward their postsecondary aspirations. Such a framework also has the potential to improve communication about graduation requirements and prioritize postsecondary planning. However, given the critical role that advising plays in helping prepare students to achieve their college and career goals beyond high school, TEA should build in district accountability for advising. It is not enough to develop a framework and make it available to districts. TEA should regularly monitor districts' implementation of the framework and report on its effectiveness in improving student outcomes.

Connecting High School to College and Career: Impact on Students

Principals and counselors were mixed in their comments about how well the Foundation High School Program enabled schools to expand career pathway opportunities for students and to prepare them for postsecondary education, employment, or military service.

Recommended next steps. In alignment with *Strategic Priority Three: Connect High School to Career and College* of the agency's strategic plan, TEA should expand the Texas Regional Pathways Network or develop other opportunities to bring districts, colleges, and industry partners together to create strong work-based learning opportunities and education and career pathways for students. In addition, TEA could facilitate partnerships to help districts work with regional community colleges to design articulated programs and courses that align to regional high-wage, in-demand careers and labor markets. Stronger secondary, postsecondary, and industry connections and alignment would assist students in making a smooth transition from high school to college and guide students in earning credentials with value in the labor market.

Students' Reactions to the Foundation High School Program

The student survey found that many seniors had sought and received guidance on the new graduation requirements and endorsement options while in high school. Most seniors went on to earn the endorsements they had reported pursuing. However, although three quarters of seniors said they aspired to attend college, fewer than one third were enrolled in an in-state college during the fall semester after high school graduation.

Recommended next steps. In alignment with *Strategic Priority Three: Connect High School to Career and College* of the agency's strategic plan, TEA may want to provide more supports designed to help students, and in particular, students from less economically advantaged backgrounds, over the threshold into college. Strong, effective college and career advising combined with student engagement in processes such as developing personal graduation plans has the potential to increase students' knowledge of the college-going process, expand students' understanding of the value of credentials for career success, and create a vision for a pathway beyond high school.

Appendix A. Background, Data, Methods, and Analysis

This appendix describes the study's data sources, population, and analysis methods.

Data Sources

The study used interview and survey data in addition to student-level administrative data from Texas, which were available through the data repository at the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas. Data were collected from interviews with principals and counselors at a representative sample of 50 high schools across Texas (Table A1). Responses to surveys were collected from all Grade 12 students from the same sample of representative high schools. In addition, high school data from the Texas Education Agency and college enrollment data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the National Student Clearinghouse were linked to the Grade 12 students who responded to the survey. These data included students' demographic characteristics, high school courses, graduation status, endorsements completed, performance on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) end-of-course exams, and enrollment in 2-year or 4-year colleges.

Table A1. Study Population and Data Sources Used in This Study

Study Population	Data Collection Year and Type	
	2018–19	2019–20
Principals	Interview	n/a
Counselors	Interview	n/a
Grade 12 students	2018–19 administrative graduation data Survey	College enrollment data
Education Service Centers	Interview	n/a

Note. n/a = not applicable.
Source. Author compilation.

Study Population

The study included data collected from 50 high schools across Texas (Table A2). Interviews were conducted with 50 high school principals and 50 high school counselors in fall and winter 2018 and spring 2019. At the beginning of the interviews, principals and counselors were asked the number of years in which they had worked in that role in Texas and at their current school (Table A3). This information was used to determine the initial sets of questions. Principals and counselors who had been employed in their current high school for 4 years or more were asked questions about changes made to their current high schools as a result of the changes to the high school

graduation requirements. Principals and counselors whose tenure at their current schools was fewer than 4 years skipped those questions. The study included survey responses from 5,633 Grade 12 students from the same 50 high schools (Table A4).

Table A2. 2015–16 Demographic Characteristics of Participating Schools

School Characteristic	High Schools	State
Community Type (districts)	**50**	**1,207**
Charter school districts	8%	15%
Independent town	4%	6%
Major suburban	4%	7%
Major urban	6%	1%
Nonmetropolitan fast growing	2%	3%
Nonmetropolitan stable	16%	14%
Other central city	10%	3%
Other central city suburban	10%	13%
Rural	40%	38%
Student Demographics	**32,419**	**5,284,252**
Economically disadvantaged	57.9%	59.0%
Limited English proficient	7.7%	18.5%
Special education	9.5%	7.5%
African American	11.9%	12.6%
Hispanic	51.5%	52.2%
White	32.6%	28.5%
American Indian	0.5%	0.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8%	4.1%
Two or more races	1.8%	2.1%

Note. Statistics compiled from the 2015–16 Texas Academic Performance Reports.

Table A3. 2018–19 Principal and Counselor Tenure at their current high school

	Number	Percentage
Principal at a school in Texas for 4+ years	35	70.0
Principal at current high school in Texas for 4+ years	20	40.0
Counselor at a school in Texas for 4+ years	37	74.0
Counselor at current high school in Texas for 4+ years	27	54.0

Source. Author compilation.

Table A4. 2018–19 Survey Responses by Student Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Total Grade 12 Students	Percentage
Gender		
Female	2,829	50.2
Male	2,802	49.8
Race/ethnicity		
African American	596	10.6
Asian	102	1.8
Hispanic	2,932	52.1
White	1,856	33.0
Other	145	2.6
Student group		
Special education	333	5.9
Non-special education	5,298	94.1
Economically disadvantaged	3,013	53.5
Non-economically disadvantaged	2,618	46.5
English learner students	259	4.6
Non-English learner students	5,372	95.4

Note. Two students had missing demographic information and are not included in the table.
Source. Author compilation.

Methods

A random sample of 50 high schools, representative of the 20 education service center (ESC) regions in Texas, were recruited for the implementation study. The list of high schools recruited to participate were drawn from a sampling frame that included a method called randomly split zones (RSZs; Singh & Ye, 2016).

High School Sampling Frame

The school population of inference for inclusion in the study included Texas state accountability schools that offer Grade 12 and are not alternative education schools. In the 2015–16 academic year, 8,673 schools were included in the list of Texas state accountability public schools. After dropping 926 schools that were not flagged as regular instructional, one school that was flagged as alternative education, and 6,274 schools that do not offer Grade 12, the final list of schools used to randomly select 50 high schools was 1,472 schools.

A random sample of 50 schools that were representative of the 20 regions in Texas was drawn from the list. The school list was stratified by region. Two schools were allocated to each of the regions that have fewer than 62 schools, and three schools were allocated to each of the regions that have 62 schools or more. In addition, enrollment, urbanicity, and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students were used to sort the school list before sampling.

Because additional samples were needed to be released on a one-by-one basis in the case of a nonresponse, which traditional sampling methods cannot satisfy, an innovative sampling method—RSZ (Singh & Ye, 2016)—was used. RSZ provides a random replacement strategy based on the idea of reserve samples of size one for ensuring unbiased estimation, and the initial sample released has the same size as the target completes.

The final sample contained 50 originally sampled schools and five additional replacement schools for each of the sampled schools. In total, the sample file includes a list of 300 schools with variables indicating school group (each group in a region has a sampled school with five additional replacement replicates, and the research team should obtain responses from only one school from each group in a region), the sequence of release, sampling weights, and other school variables on the school list.

Principal Interviews

Principal interviews took place at the high schools during the 2018–19 academic year (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). A total of 50 principals were interviewed, one from each high school. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were coded using the NVivo qualitative software program. The research team first created a preliminary coding outline and structure based on the research questions, interview protocols, and themes that emerged during data collection. Interrater reliability was established before the raw interview data were coded. Using the coded data, researchers then identified key findings or themes mentioned by principals.

Counselor Interviews

Counselor interviews took place at the high schools during the 2018–19 academic year (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). A total of 50 counselors were interviewed, one from each high school. When a high school had more than one counselor, the research team requested the interview with the college and career guidance counselor or with the Grade 9 guidance counselor. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were coded using the NVivo qualitative software program. The research team first created a preliminary coding

outline and structure based on the research questions, interview protocols, and themes that emerged during data collection. Interrater reliability was established before the raw interview data were coded. Using the coded data, researchers then identified key findings or themes mentioned by counselors.

Student Surveys

Grade 12 students in all 50 high schools were requested to complete the student survey. The research team administered the survey onsite during one of the core classes, either homeroom, English language arts, or government/economics, or students were pulled to complete the survey in the library, auditorium, or cafeteria. At least 1 week before each site visit, participating high schools were provided parent/guardian consent forms for students to take home to be signed. The consent forms detailed the nature of the study as well as the types of items included on the survey. Parents of students who did not wish for their child to take the survey signed and returned the consent forms to the school and were collected by the research team. All surveys were collected by a team member trained in the data collections methods specific to this study. A total of 6,644 Grade 12 students attended the 50 high schools. Overall, 5,659 students responded to the survey, for a responses rate of 85.2%.

In addition, the research team created a longitudinal data set that tracked each student who responded to the survey through high school graduation and 1 year into postsecondary education. A total of 5,633 students were matched to administrative records for longitudinal tracking. The research team used descriptive statistics to examine the numbers and percentages of students who responded to each survey question.

Education Service Center Interviews

During the site visits, the research team learned that all counselors received training on the Foundation High School Program from their regional ESC. To learn more about the kinds of training and support that were provided to district staff, the research team conducted interviews with 24 staff from all 20 ESCs during summer 2020. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were coded using the NVivo qualitative software program. The research team first created a preliminary coding outline and structure based on the research questions, interview protocols, and themes that emerged during data collection. Interrater reliability was established before the raw interview data were coded. Using the coded data, researchers then identified key findings or themes mentioned by counselors.

Appendix B. Interview Protocols

Principal Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____. I'm a researcher with American Institutes for Research, or AIR.

AIR, in partnership with the Texas Education Agency, received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate implementation and outcomes associated with the Foundation High School Program. As you are aware, the Foundation High School Program replaced the previous 4x4 graduation requirements in the 2014–15 school year.

As part of the FHSP evaluation, AIR is conducting interviews with school leaders and counselors to provide feedback to TEA about the Foundation High School Program. Thank you for taking the time to participate in today's interview. To thank you for your time, you will receive a $50 Amazon gift card upon completion of the interview.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. We will treat the data collected during this interview as confidential and will not include any names or identifying information in any of our reports. Do you agree to participate? *Confirm that all participants say "yes."*

We typically audio record interviews to ensure that we accurately capture your responses, rather than relying solely on typed notes. Do you agree to be audio recorded? *If the participant agrees, begin the recording.*

Do you have any questions before we begin?

FHSP STUDY: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL		
RQ #	**Q #**	**Protocol Questions**
		When recording starts, state the following: ◆ **Today is [Date]** ◆ **Principal Interview at [School Name]**
Screening and Background Questions		
	1	How long have you been a principal in Texas? ◆ How long have you been a principal at this school?
2	2	Please describe the endorsements currently offered to students at your school. *Jot these down so you can refer back to the list later.*
If the interviewee has been a principal for **4 or more years** in this school, continue to **Protocol 1** If the interviewee has been a principal for **less than 4 years** in this school, skip to **Protocol 2**		

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1		
RQ #	**Q #**	**Protocol Questions**
Section 1: Changes Made By School Leaders As A Result Of FHSP		
I'm going to ask you a series of questions about **changes** that you made as a school leader as a result of the changes to the high school graduation requirements.		
2d	3	Did you make any changes to your school's courses in response to the change from the 4x4 graduation requirements to the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements? *Probe to ask if the school added or removed entire courses or sections of courses, or if they created new pathways or course sequences that relate to specific endorsements.* Have you made any additional changes to your school's courses since? Please explain. *Probe to ask if the school has made any recent changes in the last few years based on student interest, enrollment, staff availability or capacity, etc.*
2d	4	Has your district implemented any new CTE pathways or courses aligned with the new graduation requirements? *Probe to ask about specific pathways and associated courses.*
2e	5	What staffing changes did you make at your school to accommodate the new graduation requirements? ◆ Did you hire additional staff, or repurpose staff to teach new coursework? If YES: ◆ What types of staff did you hire? ◆ If non-teaching staff: What are their responsibilities? ◆ If teaching staff: What do they teach? *Probe to ask for the reasons staffing changes were made, was it a result of changes in courses or new sequences of courses and endorsements?* *Additional staffing changes could include staff obtaining new certifications to teach coursework, or bringing in community or industry members to teach courses.*
2	6	Did you have any connections or regular communication with local businesses or industries prior to implementing the Foundation High School Program, in order to offer coursework, internships, or apprenticeships to students? If YES: ◆ Please describe the business or industry relationships your school had, including the types of opportunities provided to students as a result of these relationships. ◆ Are these student opportunities credit bearing or related to specific courses? How, if at all, did the changes in graduation requirements impact your communication, or relationships with local businesses or industries? ◆ Please describe any new opportunities for students that resulted from these changes in relationships with local businesses or industries. ◆ If NO connections: Do you have plans to make connections with local businesses or industries in the future? Please explain.

Section 2: Current Practices In Response To FHSP		
I'm going to ask you a series of questions about the high school graduation requirements, endorsements, and pathways at your school.		
2b	7	How does your school inform students and parents about the high school graduation requirements and endorsement options offered at your school? ◆ Are there any challenges related to communicating abut high school graduation requirements and endorsement options to students and parents?
2f	8	How do you communicate information about graduation requirements to teachers and other school-based staff, including school counselors? ◆ What is your perception of teachers' and other staff members', including counselors, understanding of the graduation requirements and endorsements? ◆ Do you, or does your district, provide any training to counselors or other school-based staff to inform them of, and help them work with students to fulfill, the graduation requirements? If YES: ◆ Who provides the training (and where), and what is the content of the training? ◆ How do counselors (or other staff) respond to the training? ◆ Is the training helpful or useful? Why/why not?
Section 3: Impact Of FHSP On School, Staff, And Students		
In this last series of questions, I'm going to ask you about the impact of the new high school graduation requirements on your school, its staff, and its students.		
2	9 10	In your opinion, has the impact of the new graduation requirements on students been negative, positive, or neutral? ◆ Please explain. Is the impact of the new graduation requirements different for different types of students? ◆ Please explain. *Probe to determine if the changes most positively impact certain students, and more negatively impact other students.*
2	11	To what degree has the Foundation High School Program allowed your school to create more career pathway opportunities for students? ◆ To what degree are students taking advantage of those new pathways? Is this typical of most high schools in your district? (SKIP IF THIS IS THE ONLY HIGH SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT) ◆ Please explain

2	12	Have the changes you've made in your school as a result of switching to the Foundation High School Program impacted the college and career readiness of your students? ◆ Please explain
2	13	In your opinion, has the impact of switching to the Foundation High School Program on teachers and other school staff been negative, positive, or neutral? ◆ Please explain
2	14	What additional information or resources, if any, does your school need in order to help you better implement the Foundation High School Program?
2	15	In general, are you glad the state changed the high school graduation requirements to the Foundation High School Program? Why/why not?
2	16	What additional feedback or comments would you like to share about the Foundation High School Program?

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2		
RQ #	**Q #**	**Protocol Questions**
Section 1: Current Practices In Response To FHSP		
I'm going to ask you a series of questions about the high school graduation requirements, endorsements, and pathways at your school.		
2d	3	Has your district implemented any new CTE pathways aligned with the new graduation requirements? *Probe to ask about specific pathways and associated courses.*
2b	4	How does your school inform students and parents of the high school graduation requirements and endorsement options? ◆ Are there any challenges related to communicating abut high school graduation requirements and endorsement options to students and parents?
2f	5	How do you communicate information about graduation requirements to teachers and other school-based staff, including school counselors? ◆ What is your perception of teachers' and other staff members', including counselors, understanding of the graduation requirements and endorsements? ◆ Do you, or does your district, provide any training to counselors or other school-based staff to inform them of, and help them work with students to fulfill, the graduation requirements? If YES: ◆ Who provides the training (and where), and what is the content of the training? ◆ How do counselors (or other staff) respond to the training? ◆ Is the training helpful or useful? Why/why not?

2e	6	Since you started working at your school, what staffing changes, if any, have you made to accommodate the new graduation requirements? ◆ Did you hire additional staff to teach new coursework? If YES: ◆ What kind of staff did you hire? ◆ If non-teaching staff: What are their responsibilities? ◆ If teachers: What do they teach? *Probe to ask for the reasons staffing changes were made, was it a result of changes in courses or new sequences of courses and endorsements?*
2	7	Do you have any connections or regular communication with local businesses or industries in order to offer coursework, internships, or apprenticeships to students? ◆ If YES: Please describe the business or industry relationships you have, including the types of opportunities provided to students as a result of these relationships. *Probe to ask about internships or apprenticeships, are there any opportunities, or new opportunities, for students to participate in internships or apprenticeships.* ◆ If NO: Do you have plans to make connections with local businesses or industries in the future? Please explain.

Section 2: Impact Of FHSP On School, Staff, And Students

In this last series of questions, I'm going to ask you about the impact of the new high school graduation requirements on your school, its staff, and its students

2	8	To what degree do you believe high school graduation requirements allows your school to create more career pathway opportunities for students? ◆ To what degree are students taking advantage of those new pathways?
2	9	To what extent do you believe the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements help to prepare students for college and career? ◆ Please explain.
2	10	What additional information or resources, if any, does your school need in order to help you better implement the Foundation High School Program?
2	11	What additional feedback or comments would you like to share about implementing the Foundation High School Program?

Counselor Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____. I'm a researcher with American Institutes for Research, or AIR.

AIR, in partnership with the Texas Education Agency, received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate implementation and outcomes associated with the Foundation High School Program. As you are aware, the Foundation High School Program replaced the previous 4x4 graduation requirements in the 2014–15 school year.

As part of the FHSP evaluation, AIR is conducting interviews with school leaders and counselors to provide feedback to TEA about the Foundation High School Program. Thank you for taking the time to participate in today's interview. To thank you for your time, you will receive a $50 Amazon gift card upon completion of the interview.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. We will treat the data collected during this interview as confidential and will not include any names or identifying information in any of our reports. Do you agree to participate? *Confirm that all participants say "yes."*

We typically audio record interviews to ensure that we accurately capture your responses, rather than relying solely on typed notes. Do you agree to be audio recorded? *If the participant agrees, begin the recording.*

Do you have any questions before we begin?

HB 5 STUDY: COUNSELOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL		
RQ #	**Q #**	**Protocol Questions**
		When recording starts, state the following: ◆ **Today is [Date]** ◆ **Counselor Interview at [School Name]**
SCREENING QUESTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION		
	1	How long have you been a counselor in Texas? How long at this school?
2	2	Can you describe the endorsements currently offered to students in your school? *Jot these down so you can refer back to the list later.*
If the interviewee has been a counselor for **4 or more years** in this school, continue to **Protocol 1** If the interviewee has been a counselor for **less than 4 years** in this school, skip to **Protocol 2**		

HB 5 STUDY: COUNSELOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1		
RQ #	**Q #**	**Protocol Questions**
Section 1: Changes Made By Counselors As A Result Of FHSP		
I'm going to ask you a series of questions about changes that you made as a counselor as a result of the change in high school graduation requirements.		
2f	3	Did you receive any training to assist students with navigating the FHSP graduation requirements? If YES: ◆ Who provided the training (and where), and what was the content of the training? ◆ How did counselors (or other staff) respond to the training? ◆ Was the training helpful or useful? Why/why not? If YES or NO: ◆ Is there any type of training that you would have liked to receive?
3a	4	Following implementation of FHSP, did your duties as a counselor change to accommodate the new graduation requirements? If YES: ◆ Has this resulted in a change of duties, additional duties, substitution of duties?
	5	Have you changed your counseling process in response to the FHSP? If YES: ◆ What do you do differently?
	6	Are there any additional changes that we have not discussed that you made at your school as a result of the changes to the graduation requirements?
Section 2: Current Practices In Response To FHSP		
I'm going to ask you a series of questions about the high school graduation requirements, endorsements, and pathways at your school.		
	7	How does your school inform students and parents of the high school graduation requirements and endorsement options? ◆ Are there any challenges related to communicating about high school graduation requirements and endorsement options to students and parents?
	8	To what degree do you believe that students and parents have a solid understanding of the endorsements offered at your school and the courses your school offers for students to complete them? (NOTE: If the school only offers one endorsement, only ask about course options) *Probe to ask about specific items that parents and students do not understand, or things that are confusing about the graduation requirements.*

3c	9	(SKIP IF THE SCHOOL ONLY OFFERS ONE ENDORSEMENT) How do you help students select which endorsement to pursue? *Probe to ask what they do if students are undecided and what they do if students want to pursue more than one endorsement. What factors do they take into account, and when does this occur?*
3c	10	How do you help students select which courses to follow to earn an endorsement? *Probe to ask what factors they take into account (student interest, grades, courses taken, test scores).*
	11	(SKIP IF THE SCHOOL ONLY OFFERS ONE ENDORSEMENT) What process do you go through if a student wants to change their endorsement? *Probe to ask what they do if students want to change their endorsement shortly (1–2 years) before they graduate.* Is there a point in time when you tell students that they can no longer change their endorsement, and why?
	12	How do you help students determine if they should earn a distinguished level of achievement? *Probe to ask what factors they take into account (grades, courses taken, test scores).*
3	13	Do students in your school have the opportunity to participate in paid or unpaid internships? If YES: ◆ What internship opportunities does your school offer? ◆ Are students at your school participating in internships offered by businesses or other institutions? ◆ How do you advise students about internship opportunities? ◆ Are internships only available to particular groups of students? What are the qualifications? ◆ Has your school made any changes to internship opportunities based on FHSP? If NO: ◆ Do you plan to offer any internship opportunities? ◆ Does your school experience any barriers or challenges to offering internship opportunities?
3b	14	Do you feel you have adequate time to support students with navigating the graduation requirements? *If yes, probe to ask how they fit in all of their counseling duties.* *If no, probe to ask them what has been challenging or difficult. Probe to ask if there are counseling duties they feel they do not have time to do. Have they identified any solutions to these challenges?*

Section 3: Impact Of FHSP On School, Staff, And Students

In this last series of questions, I'm going to ask you about the impact the changes to the high school graduation requirements had on your school and its staff and students.

3	15	In your opinion, has the impact of the new graduation requirements on students been negative, positive, or neutral? ◆ Please explain.
	16	Is the impact of the new graduation requirements different for different types of students? ◆ Please explain. *Probe to determine if the changes most positively impact certain students, and more negatively impact other students.*
	17	To what degree do you believe that FHSP has allowed your school to create more career pathway opportunities for students? ◆ To what degree are students taking advantage of those new pathways?
	19	Do you believe the changes made in your school as a result of changes to the graduation requirements impacted the college and career readiness of your students? ◆ Please explain
	20	In your opinion, has the impact of the changes to the graduation requirements on counselors been negative, positive, or neutral? ◆ Please explain
	21	What additional information or resources, if any, does your school need in order to help you better implement the Foundation High School Program?
	22	In general, are you glad the state changed the high school graduation requirements? Why–why not?
	23	What additional feedback or comments would you like to share about the changes to the high school graduation requirements?

HB 5 STUDY: COUNSELOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2		
RQ #	**Q #**	**Protocol Questions**
Section 1: Current Practices In Response To FHSP		
I'm going to ask you a series of questions about the high school graduation requirements, endorsements, and pathways at your school.		
2f	3	Did you receive any training to assist students with navigating the FHSP graduation requirements? If YES: ◆ Who provided the training (and where), and what was the content of the training? ◆ How did counselors (or other staff) respond to the training? ◆ Was the training helpful or useful? Why/why not? If YES or NO: Is there any type of training that you would have liked to receive?
3b	4	How does your school inform students and parents of the high school graduation requirements and endorsement options? ◆ Are there any challenges related to communicating about high school graduation requirements and endorsement options to students and parents?
	5	To what degree do you believe that students and parents have a solid understanding of the endorsements offered at your school and the courses your school offers for students to complete them? (NOTE: If the school only offers one endorsement, only ask about course options) *Probe to ask what evidence of understanding they have.* *Probe to ask about specific items that parents and students do not understand, or things that are confusing about the graduation requirements.*
3c	6	(SKIP IF THE SCHOOL ONLY OFFERS ONE ENDORSEMENT) How do you help students select which endorsement to pursue? *Probe to ask what they do if students are undecided and what they do if students want to pursue more than one endorsement.*
	7	How do you help students select which courses to follow to earn an endorsement? *Probe to ask what factors they take into account (student interest, grades, courses taken, test scores).*
	8	What process do you go through if a student wants to change their endorsement? *Probe to ask what they do if students want to change their endorsement shortly (1-2 years) before they graduate.* Is there a point in time when you tell students that they can no longer change their endorsement?
	9	How do you help students determine if they should earn a distinguished level of achievement? *Probe to ask what factors they take into account (grades, courses taken, test scores).*

3	10	Do students in your school have the opportunity to participate in paid or unpaid internships? If YES: ◆ What internship opportunities does your school offer? ◆ Are students at your school participating in internships offered by businesses or other institutions? ◆ How do you advise students about internship opportunities? ◆ Are internships only available to particular groups of students? What are the qualifications? ◆ Has your school made any changes to internship opportunities based on FHSP? If NO: ◆ Does your school experience any barriers or challenges to offering internship opportunities?
3b	11	Do you feel you have adequate time to support students with navigating the graduation requirements? *If yes, probe to ask how they fit in all of their counseling duties.* *If no, probe to ask them what has been challenging or difficult. Probe to ask if there are counseling duties they feel they do not have time to do.*

Section 2: Impact Of FHSP On School, Staff, And Students

In this last series of questions, I'm going to ask you about the impact the changes to the high school graduation requirements had on your school and its staff and students.

3	12	What is your current opinion of the graduation requirements included in the Foundation High School Program? ◆ Please explain.
	13	Do you believe the Foundation High School Program effects (helps of hinders) groups of students differently? ◆ Please explain. *Probe to determine if the changes most positively impact certain students, and more negatively impact other students.*
	14	To what degree do you believe that the Foundation High School Program allows your school to create more career pathway opportunities for students? ◆ To what degree are students taking advantage of these pathways?
	15	To what extent do you believe the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements help to prepare students for college and career? ◆ Please explain.
	16	What additional information or resources, if any, does your school need in order to help you better implement the Foundation High School Program?
	17	What additional feedback or comments would you like to share about the changes to the high school graduation requirements?

Education Service Center interview

Hello, my name is _____. I'm a researcher with American Institutes for Research, or AIR.

AIR, in partnership with the Texas Education Agency, received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate implementation and outcomes associated with the Foundation High School Program. As you are aware, the Foundation High School Program replaced the previous 4x4 graduation requirements in the 2014–15 school year.

During the 2018–19 academic year, AIR conducted site visits to high schools across Texas to better understand how districts were implementing the Foundation High School Program. During the site visits, AIR learned that the majority of counselors received training to assist students with navigating the Foundation High School Program and that the training was provided by their Education Service Center. As a follow up, TEA would like to learn more about the kinds of training that are provided to district staff as it relates to the Foundation High School Program or graduation requirements in general.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. We will treat the data collected during this interview as confidential and will not include any names or identifying information in any of our reports. Do you agree to participate? [Confirm that all participants say "yes."]

We typically audio record interviews to ensure that we accurately capture your responses, rather than relying solely on typed notes. Do you agree to be audio recorded? [If the participant agrees, begin the GoToMeeting recording].

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Do you offer training or resources on the Foundation High School Program?

If yes, branch to these items.

2. Please describe the kinds of trainings you offer or walk me through what your training sessions look like. *[Probe for what it looks like, who is it for (counselors/staff), do they tailor it or is it a standard training.]*

If no, branch to these items.

3. Why don't you offer training on the FHSP?
4. Please describe how districts can request training from your region.
5. Have you been able to support districts with these requests?
 a. *If not, what do you think is needed?*

6. How do you assess the types of trainings your ESC provides? *[Probes: Does the ESC regularly solicit requests from district staff? Does the ESC give presentations to district staff on what is available at the ESC? Do you receive questions from parents or the community?]* [IF DISTRICT DOES NOT AND HAS NOT PROVIDED TRAINING OR RESOURCES YOU CAN STOP ASKING QUESTIONS HERE]

7. Have you provided on-site consultation to high schools on implementing the Foundation High School Program?
 a. If so, please describe.

8. Do you get requests from districts for resources or software to help implement the Foundation High School Program?
 a. If so, please describe the kinds of software or resources the region provides.

9. Do you provide any training, in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission, on the changing labor market and/or fastest-growing job occupation sectors in the region?

10. Are there other groups/organizations in the region providing training regarding the Foundation High Foundation High School Program to your districts?
 a. If yes, what kind of training are they providing?

11. How do you stay up to date on changes being made to the Foundation High School Program?
 a. *[Probe: where are they getting their information]*

12. How do you share these updates with your districts?

Thank you for participating in the interview!

Appendix C. Grade 12 Student Survey

We would like to know your thoughts about some of your experiences in high school. We are particularly interested in your experiences with selecting and completing an endorsement, interactions with your teachers and counselors, and future plans.

This is a questionnaire, not a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

This survey is voluntary. We hope that you will answer all of the questions, but you can skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

All of your answers are confidential. No one will be told how you answered any of the questions. Your responses will be combined with those of the other students in your school to help us describe students' experiences in grade 12.

Thank you for completing this survey!

Instructions: Please read each of the questions carefully and select the response that is most true for you. Please fill in the circles completely.

Section A: Endorsement Selection

Upon entering high school, students are required to select an endorsement. As you answer the next set of questions, focus on the endorsement you that you selected upon entering high school.

1. Who did you talk to before selecting an endorsement for your freshman year?

(Select all that apply.)

- ◯ Parent(s) or guardian(s)
- ◯ Middle school counselor(s)
- ◯ High school guidance counselor
- ◯ Teacher(s)
- ◯ Principal or assistant principal(s)
- ◯ Brother(s) or sister(s)
- ◯ Coach(es)
- ◯ Religious leader (minister, priest, rabbi, etc.)
- ◯ Friend(s)
- ◯ No one
- ◯ Someone else. Who?_____

2. Who helped you the most with selecting an endorsement for your freshman year?

(Select one.)

- ◯ Parent(s) or guardian(s)
- ◯ Middle school counselor(s)
- ◯ High school guidance counselor
- ◯ Teacher(s)
- ◯ Principal or assistant principal(s)
- ◯ Brother(s) or sister(s)
- ◯ Coach(es)
- ◯ Religious leader (minister, priest, rabbi, etc.)
- ◯ Friend(s)
- ◯ No one
- ◯ Someone else. Who?_____

3. What resources did you review before making your endorsement selection for your freshman year?

(Select all that apply.)

- ◯ Reviewed handouts and informational brochures provided by the school (such as the Graduation Toolkit)
- ◯ Reviewed college admissions requirements
- ◯ Took career assessment(s) to identify what I am good at
- ◯ Explored career and education online tools (such as Texas Career Check)
- ◯ Reviewed course requirements aligned to each endorsement
- ◯ Other Which resource?_____
- ◯ I did not review any resources

4. What activities did you complete before making your endorsement selection for your freshman year?

(Select all that apply.)

- ◯ Attended college fairs
- ◯ Attended career fairs
- ◯ Searched the internet for job options or careers
- ◯ Looked at salaries for different career options
- ◯ Talked with someone who works in a job I am interested in
- ◯ Worked or volunteered in a job related to my endorsement choice
- ◯ Other What activity?_____
- ◯ I did not complete any activities

5. Did your high school offer your first choice endorsement?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

6. Which endorsement(s) have you completed or are you currently pursuing?

(Select all that apply.)

- ◯ Arts and humanities **(Continue to section B)**
- ◯ Business and industry **(Continue to section B)**
- ◯ Multidisciplinary **(Continue to section B)**
- ◯ Public services **(Continue to section B)**
- ◯ Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)? **(Continue to section B)**
- ◯ I am not going to complete an endorsement. Why?_____
 (Skip to Section C)

Section B: Endorsement Completion

(PLEASE ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU HAVE COMPLETED OR ARE CURRENTLY PURSUING AN ENDORSEMENT. IF YOU ARE NOT COMPLETING AN ENDORSEMENT SKIP TO SECTION C)

In this section, focus on the endorsement that you have completed or are working towards completing when answering the questions.

7. Is the endorsement you completed or are pursuing the one you selected for your freshman year?

(Select all that apply.)

- ◯ Yes **(Skip to question 10)**
- ◯ No **(Continue to question 8)**

8. How many times did you switch your endorsement?

- ◯ 1 time
- ◯ 2 times
- ◯ More than 2 times

9. Please describe why you switched your endorsement.

10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your choice of endorsement?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am very satisfied with the endorsement I have completed or am pursuing.	◯	◯	◯	◯
I wish there were other endorsement options available in my district.	◯	◯	◯	◯
I had lots of options in the courses I could take for my endorsement.	◯	◯	◯	◯
I was able to enroll in the courses that I need to complete my endorsement.	◯	◯	◯	◯

11. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about whether your endorsement is related to your future plans?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am very familiar with the types of jobs related to my endorsement.	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am planning to continue my education after high school in the area of my endorsement.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Pursuing an endorsement in high school has helped me select a career for my future.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Pursuing an endorsement connects what I am learning in the classroom to life outside the classroom.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Pursuing an endorsement has helped me plan for life after graduation.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Pursuing an endorsement has helped me be better prepared for college or career.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Choosing courses aligned with an endorsement helps me see how my classwork is relevant for my future.	◯	◯	◯	◯
It is clear how the endorsement that I completed or am pursuing is linked to life after high school.	◯	◯	◯	◯

12. Are you planning to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not sure

13. Are you aware of the course requirements for obtaining a distinguished level of achievement?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not sure

14. Are you aware that only students completing Algebra II are eligible for the top 10% automatic college admission for Texas public colleges and universities?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not sure

Section C: High School Counselors (ALL STUDENTS COMPLETE THIS SECTION)

The next set of questions asks about your interactions with your high school counselor(s).

15. Did you complete a personal graduation plan with your high school counselor?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not sure

16. How often did you meet with your high school counselor last year?

- ◯ Never
- ◯ 1 time
- ◯ 2 times
- ◯ 3 – 5 times
- ◯ More than 5 times

17. How helpful was your high school counselor in helping you plan what to do after high school?

- ◯ Not at all helpful
- ◯ Somewhat helpful
- ◯ Helpful
- ◯ Very helpful

18. Please indicate during which years your high school counselor(s) has done each of the following activities:

	Never	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Helped me select courses that meet the district's graduation requirements	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Helped me select courses that I need for work or admission to college	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Helped me decide what to do after I graduate	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Talked to me about how to get a job	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Talked to me about colleges/schools that are suited to my interests and abilities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Talked to me about how to apply for college	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Had me complete a career inventory or assessment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Talked to me about different types of careers that are suited to my interests and abilities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Talked to me about earning a distinguished level of achievement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Talked to me about completing Algebra II	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Section D. Future Plans

The next set of questions asks about your plans after high school.

19. What will be your primary activity next year? (Select one.)

(Select all that apply.)

- ◯ Continuing my education at a four-year college
- ◯ Continuing my education at a two-year college
- ◯ Continuing my education in an apprenticeship
- ◯ Working
- ◯ Being active in the military
- ◯ Still enrolled in high school
- ◯ Not sure
- ◯ Other: What?_____

20. During which years has someone at your high school talked to you about each of the following?

	Never	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Admissions requirements for four-year colleges	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Your likelihood of being accepted at different types of colleges	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Your readiness for college-level work	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The type of skills you need for college or vocational/technical school	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
How much college costs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
How to pay for college	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Differences between college courses that count towards a degree (credit-bearing courses) and college courses that do not count towards a degree (remedial courses)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

21. During which years has someone at your school helped you with the following?

	Never	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Assessing your career interests and abilities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Developing a career plan	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Providing information about occupations (salaries, working conditions, future job outlook for various occupations)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teaching job search techniques (where/how to look for a job)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teaching resume writing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Helping you find a job	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teaching job interviewing skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

22. Did you participate in an internship during your time in high school?

- ◯ Yes, a paid internship
- ◯ Yes, an unpaid internship
- ◯ No
- ◯ Not sure

23. Are you currently working for pay while you are in high school?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

24. What is the highest level of education you plan to complete? (Select one.)

- ◯ High school diploma
- ◯ Technical/vocational school certificate
- ◯ Two-year college degree/Associate's degree
- ◯ Four-year college degree/Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Graduate degree/MBA, MD, JD, PhD, Master's degree

25. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your high school courses, assistance from your teachers or counselors, or your post-high school plans?

Thank you for completing the survey!

Appendix D. Foundation High School Program Endorsements and Pathway Options

Table D1 lists the five Foundation High School Program endorsements and the pathway options students can choose to earn the endorsement.

Table D1. Foundation High School Program Endorsements and Pathway Options

Endorsements	Pathway Options
STEM	A coherent sequence of courses selected from the following: ◆ CTE courses with a final course from the STEM career cluster ◆ Computer science ◆ Mathematics ◆ Science ◆ A combination of no more than two of the categories listed above
Business and Industry	A coherent sequence of courses selected from the following: ◆ CTE courses with a final course from the Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources; Architecture & Construction; Arts, Audio/Video, Technology & Communications; Business Management & Administration; Finance; Hospitality & Tourism; Information Technology; Manufacturing, Marketing; Transportation, or Distribution & Logistics CTE career cluster ◆ The following English electives: public speaking, debate, advanced broadcast journalism including newspaper and yearbook ◆ Technology applications ◆ A combination of credits from the categories listed above
Public Services	A coherent sequence of courses selected from the following: ◆ CTE courses with a final course from the Education & Training; Government & Public Administration; Health Science, Human Services; or Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security career cluster ◆ JROTC

Arts and Humanities	A coherent sequence of courses selected from the following: ◆ Social studies ◆ The same language in Languages Other Than English ◆ Two levels in each of two language in Languages Other Than English ◆ American Sign Language (ASL) ◆ Courses from one or two categories (art, dance, music, and theater) in fine arts ◆ English electives that are not part of Business and Industry
Multidisciplinary Studies	A coherent sequence of courses selected from the following: ◆ Four advanced courses that prepare a student to enter the workforce successfully or postsecondary education without remediation from within one endorsement area or among endorsement areas that are not in a coherent sequence ◆ Four credits in each of the four foundation subject areas to include English IV and chemistry and/or physics ◆ Four credits in AP, IB, or dual credit selected from English, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, languages other than English, or fine arts

Note. Refer to https://tea.texas.gov/academics/college-career-and-military-prep/career-and-technical-education/approved-cte-programs-of-study for a list of approved statewide CTE programs of study by endorsement.

Source. Adapted from *The Side-by-Side Comparison: Graduation Program Options to Be Implemented Beginning in 2014–2015,* https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/SidebySideGraduationPrograms_030114.pdf.

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